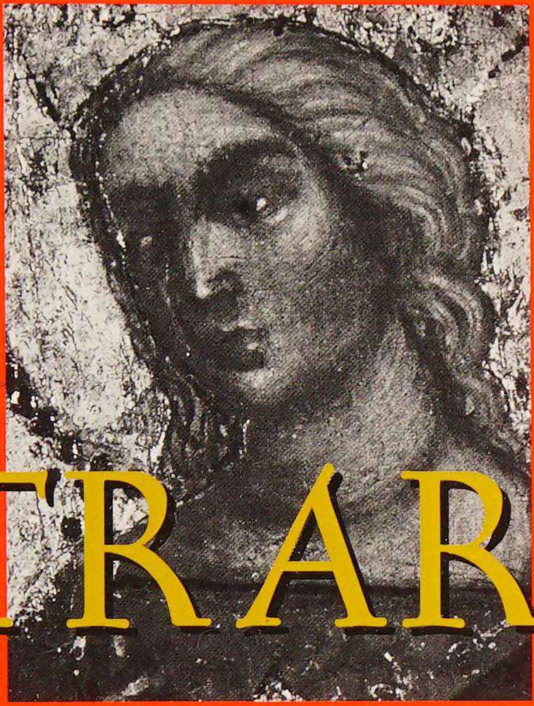
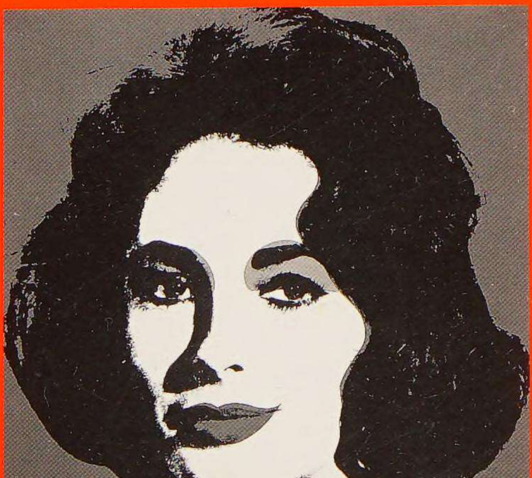


PETRARCH

Canzoniere



MARK MUSA

Poetry/Literature

"Professor Musa so well re-echoes the original text as to make us utterly unaware of reading a translation. . . . Poem 22 is so faithful, so musical, so altogether flawless that its inclusion alone would make this Englished *Canzoniere* a memorable literary event."
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—S. Botterill, *Choice*

Petrarch's characterization of the hapless lover has become an archetype. Indeed, in many of his poems on the pain and the bitter pleasure of love, we inevitably recognize a vivid and timely picture of ourselves. Humble sinner, aesthete, contemplative, man of the world, secretly tormented spirit, droll observer and advocate of life, Petrarch's protagonist is as richly complex as the age he lived in.

The poems of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* represent some of the most influential works in Western literature. Varied in form, style, and subject matter, these "scattered rhymes" contain metaphors and conceits that have been absorbed into the literature and language of love.

MARK MUSA, Distinguished Professor of Italian at Indiana University, is well known for his translations of the Italian classics, including the works of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Machiavelli. He is editor of *Dante's* Inferno: *The Indiana Critical Edition*—a translation with scholarly essays by a number of Dantists.

BARBARA MANFREDI, an independent researcher, has pursued a lifelong interest in radical poets, with a current focus on Dante.

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PETRARCH'S Canzoniere

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◆

PETRARCH

THE Canzoniere
OR
Rerum vulgarium fragmenta

⁂

TRANSLATED INTO VERSE WITH NOTES
AND COMMENTARY BY
Mark Musa

INTRODUCTION BY
Mark Musa
WITH Barbara Manfredi

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for *Isabella*

⁂

My quick-winged one, my Love,
sacred-profane-profound,
you know how Love has bound
your lovely image to my heart,
and deep in me it dwells,
most marvelous of angels,
forever bathing in the secrets
of my heart's naked art,

splashing the chilly waters of my words,
wetting my soul most softly with your light,
burning my mind in showers of your sound,
you streak my body with supreme delight.
O you who are intelligent in Love,
you are the one who makes my world go round.

(from *Almost Sonnets*)

. . . non far idolo un nome
vano, senza soggetto

(128.76–77)

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PREFACE

Petrarch took no chances. He left us an autographed copy of his *Canzoniere*. How lucky we are!

The Italian text for this edition of the lyric poems is edited from the diplomatic edition of the Vatican Library's codex Vat. Lat. 3195 by Ettore Modigliani (Rome, 1904), part of which was written by Petrarch himself and includes the final revisions of individual poems and their ordering. I have not, however, reproduced all of Petrarch's spellings from that manuscript as did Gianfranco Contini in his edition, nor have I modernized Vat. Lat. 3195 in an inconsistent fashion as do most of the editions I have consulted. While I do not retain all of the Latinisms of orthography, I always keep Petrarch's different spellings of the conjunction *and*: e, ed, and et. Since the punctuation of Vat. Lat. 3195 is not consistent and seems to be overdone, I have adopted modern conventions of punctuation, at times introducing quotation marks and parentheses when I thought the sense of the verse would be better served, particularly when complicated syntax is involved. I have not, however, altered the manuscript by using variations of indentation to indicate the parts of a ballata (the *ritornello*) or a canzone (*fronte*, *sirma*, and *piedi*).

The notes to the poems were undertaken with the aim of highlighting Petrarch's special effects (both in language and logic) and of revealing the interconnectedness of image, metaphor, and structure among the individual poems; the notes do not attempt to provide an exhaustive listing of his sources and allusions, material which may be found, for example, in editions of the lyrics by Giosuè Carducci and Severino Ferrari, or by Nicola Zingarelli. The hope has been, first, to open up access to each poem's complexities and, ultimately, to show the *Canzoniere*'s value as an integrated work—as a lyrical drama to be read consecutively from beginning to end.

Latin and Provençal sources are generally cited in the original to indicate the manner in which Petrarch borrowed from them. Biblical sources are from the *New English Bible*, except in cases where the Latin Vulgate more nearly translates the Italian. The dating of individual poems, unless otherwise indicated, is based on Ernest Hatch Wilkins's commentary in *The Making of the Canzoniere and Other Petrarchan Studies*, as well as on the Chronological Conspectus in that volume. References to Vat. Lat. 3196 derive from Wilkins's examination of Petrarch's working manuscript, in which the poet composed and conserved, then revised and edited poems for his final autograph manuscript, Vat. Lat. 3195. Some of the citations from classical authors and from early commentators on Petrarch come from the editions of Alberto Chiari, Nicola Zingarelli, and Giosuè Carducci and Severino Ferrari. The chronology given on pages xxxv–xxxvi of the Introduction was selected from that outlined in Chiari's edition of the *Canzoniere.*

Petrarch's verse does not always flow freely and easily. At times, the syntax can be rather convoluted or distorted, depending, of course, on the special effect the poet is trying to achieve. His language always strives to imitate the mood and meaning of his poems. My goal in these translations has been to preserve this delicate element in Petrarch's poetry and never to sacrifice the movement and meaning of the verse to the tyranny of rhyme. I am, however, concerned with the sounds of words and their position in my translation of each of the poems. When sound in the Italian text seems to be the dominant element in a particular poem, I am careful to imitate this sound by choosing words that play with and echo each other. I have strived to maintain the same rhythm and meter in English that Petrarch uses in each of his Italian poems. In short, I have tried to be faithful to the poem's meaning without being too literal, and faithful to its sound and music without being archaic or restricting myself to a formal rhyme scheme. Nothing is as good as the original, and if any of my translations should tempt the reader to look at Petrarch's original on the facing page, then part of my goal has been achieved. Petrarch's poetry, I feel, is meant to be read aloud. And I hope my reader will do so both in the Italian and the English. For a translation, especially of lyric poetry, this is the decisive test.

INTRODUCTION

In the last months of Francesco Petrarca's life, in 1373–1374, nearly all of the goals he had set his heart on in his young manhood had failed to materialize. Peace was remote as war raged not far from the little town of Arquà where he lived (an ongoing conflict between Padua and Venice in which mercenary Turkish troops were engaged). Hope for a return of the papal court to its seat in Rome was postponed again with the departure of Pope Urban V for Avignon after a brief stay in the Holy City. Emperor Charles IV remained in Bohemia, unpersuaded to extend his rule over Rome and Italy. The established authorities continued to interpret Petrarch's appeals for a new humanistic age with narrow chauvinism. His wish for fame had gained him as much notoriety as honor among people whose opinion he wanted to influence. There was a new outbreak of plague in Bologna. And not only were the roads to Rome too often dead ends, they were swarming with wild pigs and bandits in the absence of humane and intelligent governing. But Petrarch was not daunted. Although he was ill with tertian fever and attacks of dizziness, and weak in his legs from old injuries, he continued to rally after each disappointment and to work toward what he believed was the good of the community. His mind did not falter but became even sharper, judging from the last letters he was known to have written. With some of his old energy he made diplomatic journeys to restore peace, and when he could no longer travel, he sent his advice by courier. He wrote, edited, and revised with intense concentration during this period, bringing grand projects to a conclusion; his book of lyric poems, the *Canzoniere*, was the most important of them. The many voices speaking from these poems record Petrarch's hopes, struggles, losses, and disappointments, his engagement with some of the most crucial issues of the turbulent fourteenth century.

Also called in Latin *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (Fragments of vernacular poetry), or in Italian *Rime sparse* (Scattered rhymes), the *Canzoniere* was anything but casually put together. It came into being as a carefully wrought collection of lyric poems of varied form, style, and subject matter. The poems themselves had been written over many decades, then revised, polished, and gathered by Petrarch from time to time into manuscripts which he sent out to patrons and friends. These were brought together in one final form and recorded in his own hand during the last year of his life. The collection includes three hundred and seventeen sonnets, twenty-nine canzoni, nine sestinas (one double), seven ballads, and four madrigals.

TABLE I. *Cyclic Distribution of Poems*

PART I				PART II	
Sonnets	*Others*	*Sonnets*	*Others*	*Sonnets*	*Others*
10		24			C(264)
	B(11)		C(105)	3	
2			M(106)		C(268)
	B(14)	12		1	
7			C(119)		C(270)
	S(22)	1		52	
	C(23)		M(121)		C(323)
4		3			B(324)
	C(28)		C(125)		C(325)
	C(29)		C(126)	5	
	S(30)		C(127)		C(331)
6			C(128)		S[S] (332)
	C(37)		C(129)	26	
12		5			C(359)
	C(50)		C(135)		C(360)
1		6		5	
	M(52)		S(142)		C(366)
	C(53)	6			
	M(54)		B(149)		
	B(55)	56			
3			C(206)		
	B(59)		C(207)		
3		6			
	B(63)		S(214)		
2		22			
	S(66)		S(237)		
3		1			
	C(70)		S(239)		
	C(71)	24			
	C(72)				
	C(73)				
6					
	S(80)				

B = ballata; C = canzone; M = madrigal; S = sestina

Early in its development the work was divided by Petrarch into two parts, which stand in the final collection as poems 1–263 and 264–366. This division was sometimes used by later editors to separate the poems into the "life" and "death" of Laura, since her departure from this world is announced in poem 267. Several blank pages, whose significance has been differently interpreted, follow the last sonnet of Part I. These pages may indicate that Petrarch intended to add more poems to the work, or that he might have wanted the first part to tally with the second in terms of total number of spiritual debits and credits, with this space supplied for a final accounting. In keeping with earlier medieval practice, such a two-part form provided a framework for spiritual rebirth, experience in the first providing cause for reflection and repentance in the second and reason for self-integration at the end.

The *Canzoniere* became one of the most influential books of poetry in Western literature, its metaphors and conceits absorbed into the language of love to such a degree that it would be difficult to calculate the limits of Petrarch's influence. The sonnet, canzone, and sestina forms are redefined by it, and the mind that ruled their invention continues to shadow itself forth in Italian poetry today. The vernacular idiom he used echoes in our own language, both literary and musical; and his personification of the hapless lover as antihero has become one of our major models. Petrarch was a great lyric poet, but also a gifted psychologist whose researches into the literature of the ages and into his own psyche drew him deep into regions where true guilt and innocence are found. Humble sinner, aesthete, secretly tormented spirit, droll observer and advocate of life, the "I" in these poems possesses a personality as complex as his experience of his times. In a continual state of becoming, deterioration, or delicate balance (depending on the poem's point of view), he is certain only of once having seen and fallen in love with a woman whose qualities and effects dominate his thoughts from that day forth.

For readers of the fourteenth century, Petrarch was best known as the Christian Cicero, a moral philosopher and author of such lengthy prose treatises in Latin as the popular *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (titled *Petrarch's Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul* in a recent translation by Conrad M. Rawski), as well as for his Latin poetry, very little of which has survived. But in later years it was Petrarch's *Canzoniere* that took root and flowered in the literature. Picked over for its metaphoric and metrical riches, this enigmatic verse was transplanted into the many derivative styles known as Petrarchism—a fate which the *Canzoniere* itself prophesies by telling how his vision of Laura, in the beginning electrifying yet simple and refreshing in a chilling sort of way, is misinterpreted by a world hungry for love and is finally stripped of its relevance by Fortune toward the end. The pure dramaticity of the poems struck sensitive minds with such newness and aptness that Petrarch's story became reality for poets and readers alike, its emotional peaks and depths everyday tests of a lover's sincerity. The fact that the work examines, among other things, the peculiar interactions among poet, reader, and text, exposing the strongest and weakest points in each step of the creative and reading process, was obscured from view behind veils of mythicizing quite of Petrarch's own making.

Petrarch was one of the great ironists, capable of standing back from himself with a sense of wonder and objectivity, amusement and pain; he was one who could regard life's course with a reserved sense of its wholeness and inevitability while at the same time recording its moments as if each were happening for the first time. Out of this sense of himself as an actor in a drama being enacted in his times, he created step by step a fictional autobiography whose truths may be fully appreciated only at the completion of the work, as an experience shared by reader and poet. Yet the pleasure of reading the *Canzoniere* may also come suddenly, from its many small revelations. One in particular is the discovery that its satire is not limited to blatantly outright attacks on the political, religious, and cultural establishments of his day. Numerous other poems in the collection deliver their blows in covert ways, inviting us to rage, weep, or laugh over some perfidy or folly. And many of the poems which cause a modern reader to wince because of their extravagant style (their incessant weeping, egocentricity, and obsession with love and death) were intentionally designed to entertain and edify Petrarch's contemporary audience. Anticipating these elements in the lyrics helps explain some of the anomalous aspects of the work and establish their place in the whole as expressions of a generally tragicomic view of things, designed to give discomfort as well as pleasure, with moral uplift as a hard-won bonus.

That the *Canzoniere* is a kind of fiction Petrarch tells us himself in the first poem, as if one day he fell asleep and dreamed a dream of pleasure from which he awakened some time later a sad but wiser man. Because such an admission of error could be dismissed as a bit of prevarication or literary convention or as an expression of the sexual impotence of an old man, readers may easily accept the poems that follow and their protagonist at face value, as laments of a poet-singer torn between good and bad impulses and struggling to deal with the pathos of unrequited, illicit love. But Petrarch was combining many threads of a complex poetic tradition in his *Canzoniere*, from a body of literature that he had read and absorbed from an early age and continued to interpolate into his work throughout his life. The writings of Varro, Catullus, Horace, Virgil at his most parodic, Ovid at his peak and in exile; of Cicero, Propertius, Juvenal, Seneca, Ausonius, Boethius, the St. Augustine of the *Confessiones*, and numerous others find expression in the *Canzoniere*, along with the lyrics of goliardic, the Sicilian, and Provençal poets, of Cavalcanti, Dante and the *dolce stil nuovo* ("sweet new style"), which Petrarch inherited by virtue of being born in 1304. The individuality of Catullus, the eminent rationalism and amused stoicism of Cicero, the cosmopolitanism and dramaticity of Seneca, the metaphoric fecundity of Ovid, the sharp-tongued literalness of Juvenal, and the literary playfulness of the Horace of *Ars poetica*, all inform the styles Petrarch reveals to us in these poems. Whatever their rich variety may communicate, they do not derive from a narrow view of love poetry.

It is Dante, however, with whom Petrarch seems to carry on a running dialogue in the *Canzoniere*, rendering him the ultimate praise of imitating him from beginning to end. As Virgil came to Dante with the force of a completed text in *Inferno* I, offering himself as a guide out of the Pilgrim's moral dilemma, Dante's work may have provided the same kind of impetus for Petrarch. He may figure as the one to whom the early Apollonian poems of the *Canzoniere* are addressed, the precursor whose Beatrice is reconstituted in a nearly Christ-like Laura in poem 4 and many poems to follow. Both poets produced works that grew from certain ironies implicit in the form and style chosen; they aim, by incongruity and irresolution, at a core human truth. Although we are asked to believe, in both the *Vita nuova* and the *Canzoniere*, that each poet set out speaking in the voice of a reformed, pious, and celibate man who has conquered his weaknesses, the assumption is meant to be tested at every step of the way (even well into the *Divina commedia*, in the case of Dante). In such a dramatic structure, weakness of character is forged into strength not through windy good intentions and hyperbolic speech but through being brought up short by brute experience, Fortune, one's fellow creatures, and oneself. Each of them, Dante's Pilgrim and Petrarch's Lover, is a man in the making; the creators of their fictional autobiography, on the other hand, stand distinctly and mysteriously outside it, having detached themselves judiciously from their own life.

Dante is summoned out of the near past in the *Canzoniere* in its very first poem, which echoes a sonnet from *Vita nuova* VII, "O ye who travel on the road of Love." Both poets imagine themselves as supplicants at the side of the road of life, begging to be heard both through the sound and the sense of their songs. Each undertakes to describe a genesis, the origin of the poetic idea, which took the form of a lasting impression delivered through sense experience. At the point of perception (a triple knowing, as both describe it), the divisions begin that lead in their unfolding to the complexity of the poets' metaphoric and cognitive structures.

Petrarch's imaginative landscapes, as well as his protagonists' virtues and flaws, continually recall those of the *Commedia* while giving them a wholly individual aesthetic twist. There are veiled allusions in the *Canzoniere* to Dante's fearless descents to new levels of earthiness and squalor in the *Inferno*, echoes of his polemical fervor, self-mockery, and self-abasement in the *Purgatorio*, his self-aggrandizement and eventual harmonizing of opposing factors in the *Paradiso*. Petrarch's employment of verbal sleights of hand and his invitation to deep reading recall Dante's devices in his first two canticles, as well as his clarity and questioning of the capacity of language to bridge the gap between the physical and metaphysical in the second part of the *Paradiso*.

Dante, like Petrarch, invites us to see with the eyes of his protagonist and to imagine ourselves as he is in his becoming; but he does so with a sense of proportion always in play. He gives his Pilgram rein to wander in error but within the stringent limits of a moral system defined ever more clearly as the action unfolds. Petrarch struggles against Dante's limits, seems to go overboard, and learns to adjust to them in the *Canzoniere*. And although Dante may range over the panoply of known history in his *Commedia*, he repeatedly returns, up to the thirtieth canto of the *Paradiso*, to the first item on his agenda, the need to reform his own tortured age, as Petrarch does in his lyrics. Both are rooted in the present, in the religious and political wars of city-states, papacy, and empire, singlemindedly proselytizing for their moral beliefs with their dramas.

Along with Varro, Boethius in the *Consolatione Philosophiae*, and Dante in the *Vita nuova*, Petrarch is often linked with the tradition of Menippean satires for the variety of forms he used in the *Canzoniere*, but his satiric impulse has not been examined to any notable degree in commentary on the individual poems themselves. Yet when a political gibe is perceived in poems 199–200, for example, two sonnets about Laura's hand and glove, a wholly new purpose for these poems may emerge. Like a modern political cartoon, poem 199 draws a picture of a tiny poet observing the power figure from a vantage point somewhere near the tip of his toe (the tough politico dressed in a bridal gown):

O lovely hand that squeezes my heart tight,
enclosing in so little space my life,
hand upon which all art and care was spent
by Nature and by Heaven for its praise,

with your five pearls of oriental hue
whose only bitter cruelness is to wound me,
those fingers long and soft which naked now
luckily Love shows me for my enrichment.

Pure white and gaily light, dear glove
that covers polished ivory and fresh roses,
who ever saw on earth such gracious spoils?

Would that I had as much of her fair veil!
O the inconstancy of human things!
But this is theft, and must be taken back.

The hand without the glove reveals the bright red fingernails and ivory skin of the temptress, whose arms will suffocate protest and whose head and face, in poem 200, will block out divine light. The hand and glove symbols Petrarch coyly manipulates here—because they are known signifiers of monarchy and papacy—he repossesses through means of a new sycophantic style in poem 201, maintaining the purity of his original vision of Laura in the last lines but indicating that he has discovered the uses of flattery—learned to be sly, entered his maturity. This series of "polished" rhymes peaks with poem 205, in which the word *dolce* (sweet) is repeated thirteen times. Poem 208, on the other hand, is a no-holds-barred attack on the papacy that defines his terms unmistakably. Its tone of pious servility barely masks a scorn more carefully concealed in other poems but nonetheless enduring, reappearing at the end of the *Canzoniere* in sonnets that address the most exalted subject matter.

Petrarch probably meant for the reader to be reverent and amused at the same time in reading these poems, to hear the echo of doubt or mockery or humor in them, and to recognize the serious implications. It is doubtful that he ever intended merely to amuse with his occasional vulgarity and parody of style but more likely that when his lover is precious, fatuous, falsely pious, naively bouyant, or blinded by tears, the poet is asking the reader to look beyond the obvious and comic to causes and effects, to see how the poem fits into an argument and leads to the next. Few poems in the *Canzoniere* are free of the taint of his questioning. In the well-known "whore of Babylon" series, for example (poems 136–141), Petrarch's hatred of the corrupt papal court in Avignon expresses itself in language inferred earlier in numerous lyrics to his lady.

Petrarch was known to speak of his historical time as a continuation of the dark ages whose most striking symptom of decay was the removal of the papal court from Rome to Avignon in 1309. On this fertile ground for romance, intrigue, and religious and political protest, he constructed the materials of the *Canzoniere*. When the family was forced into exile from Florence in the same purge of Whites that banished Dante in 1302, and when it had left Italy for Avignon in 1311 (Francesco was seven), he experienced a beginning in discontinuity which provided the background for one of the central paradoxes of the work. He found himself at an early date entangled in the affairs of an establishment he scorned, in a locale that he came to love with all the passion of which he was capable, having left behind a city, Florence, which had disenfranchised him. Avignon became the poet's labyrinth and his purgatory, a "Babylon" to which he voluntarily returned for many years to serve as cleric and diplomat for cardinals and popes. Although he made frequent descents into the "open valley" of his native land and traveled into many regions of Europe, it was not until 1353 that he left Avignon for the last time. Vaucluse, on the other hand, was the beloved place of retirement from worldly affairs that completed the triangle with Italy and Avignon—Petrarch's link with the beauty of nature, with solitude, and with literary pursuits. In this small village a short distance from Avignon, where the wilderness came right up to the edge of his garden but where he felt completely safe and in possession of himself, he was able to sit at his desk and imagine another kind of wilderness across the plain, in the palaces of the papal city.

Petrarch first saw Laura in the Church of St. Clare in Avignon on 6 April 1327 (the location written by the author on the flyleaf of his copy of Virgil, which survives, and the date in poem 211 of the *Canzoniere*), a primal experience he first locates in space in poem 3 and to which he returns as if to a stillpoint throughout the collection.

Like all the facts about himself that Petrarch chose to reveal in prominent or out-of-the-way writings, this one had its peculiar significance for him; but it has been obscured by another tradition somewhat supported by the text that reveals their meeting to have been on the wooded bank of the Sorgue, near Vaucluse, where Laura walked or bathed one day with her friends. Such mixing of sacred and profane allegory was common at the time and indicated the multiform purpose the maiden served (Huizinga has noted, p. 111, that Petrarch's contemporary, Machaut, located his dalliance with Peronnelle in nature and in church, doing novenas for her on one occasion). That the site Petrarch identified was St. Clare's may be significant, since as a disciple of St. Francis and the nun who founded the order of "poor Clares," she was most loved for the very qualities he celebrates in the *Canzoniere*, for her humility, prudence, natural wisdom, generosity, and beauty of soul, as well as for her charity to the poor. Her example may have provided a needed antithesis to the Curia that ruled church practice where he worshipped, representing an ideal he could not bear to see sunk in "mud" (poem 259) without protesting. Protest he did by making one of the aspects of Laura a personification of St. Clare's Church in captivity.

On another symbolic level, Laura as Daphne (Ovid's maiden in *Metamorphoses*, turned into the laurel tree when she spurned the love of Apollo) is the poetic idea itself, which the poet pursues through the forests of feeling and thought until he almost seizes her, when she becomes the poem on the page, freed of his desire and her mortal life, transformed into someone else's plant to cultivate. This transformation is given its primary didactic meaning for Petrarch in poem 23, the canzone of the metamorphoses, when he himself becomes the laurel. Until she is transformed into the tree, Daphne/Laura is as light, free, and compelling as the desire which gives rise to the idea, or the virginal eye and ear which receive the poem in its finished form. She may at various times be herself, the poem, the poet, or the reader.

That a real Laura existed, however, became legend early in Petrarch's career. People searched for a candidate for her as they had for Dante's Beatrice (one settled on in the eighteenth century was Laura de Sade of Avignon). But details about her in the *Canzoniere* are never more than sketchy and ephemeral. "Femina è cosa mobile per natura" (a woman is by nature changeable) he admits in poem 183, as if responding to a criticism that her character seems to be too variable, changing as often as his style in these "scattered rhymes." Petrarch was well aware of the duplicitous nature of the poetry of any era written in praise of the *bella donna*, and he capitalized on it in his own way. If she was to be a projection of his better self, how to make her seductive to the reader? If she was to be the object of his lust or satirical scorn, how to conceal the edge of his blade in silken trappings? But Petrarch also insisted that Laura was more than an envisioning, more than an evocative name: "The living Laura by whose person I seem to be captured" was no deception, he wrote in a letter to his friend Giacomo Colonna, who had questioned her existence. "I wish indeed that you were joking about this particular matter, and that she indeed had been a fiction and not a madness" (Bishop, p. 31). Neither here nor anywhere else does he confirm Laura's actual identity as a woman, nor his love for her as more than a transient passion; but that she was a palpable force is undeniable. The marvelous fecundity of the *Canzoniere* lies in his desire to keep her beauty and virtue alive while acknowledging her power to lead him astray. Although Petrarch knew that in Augustinian terms he must renounce her (in his confessional *Secretum*, the dialogue with St. Augustine that he never published, love of Laura is acknowledged to be a stumbling block to his salvation), not only her usefulness to him as a medium for teaching but also those very intrinsic qualities that make the fact or fiction of her being significant continued to hold him hostage to her all the years of his life. In recantatory writings, he claimed to have given her up (e.g., "The Letter to Posterity"), but in the course of the *Canzoniere* Laura lives long after her death, and he relinquishes his hold on her only at the last moment in poem 366 when he gives up his spirit to God.

Whether or not Laura was a real woman centers on the fact that in the *Canzoniere*, unlike the *Commedia*, certain of the beloved's physical attributes are evoked more often than any others, her beauty in its essence having a talismanic value to which the poet repeatedly returns for inspiration and solace. Dante spoke of Beatrice's dress, presence, effects, voice, and speech in both the *Vita nuova* and the *Commedia*, yet he did not dwell on her bodily charms. Although Petrarch does not touch on more than Laura's eyes, face, and hair, with occasional delicate references to her arms, hands, bosom, and feet, he does depart from Dante by making her natural beauty, rather than her divine wisdom and eloquence, her most alluring feature. And he goes further in many poems in which the most precise identification is the pronoun "she," by making her a composite of the gnostic Sophia, Beatrice, Daphne, the biblical Rachel, Matelda (Beatrice's handmaiden in Purgatory), Francesca da Rimini, Proserpina, the Italian goddess Cardea (whose power is to open what is shut and to shut what is open), Rhea Silvia (mother of Rome), Minerva, Diana and Venus—successors and precursors to Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary. But taken all together Laura's physical attributes make a strange pastiche: her black and white eyes, blond hair that undergoes several style changes, black-black eyebrows, bloodred lips, and pearly skin and fingernails often give the appearance of the courtesan. At other times, when Petrarch does not infer corruption but elicits instead an ideal natural beauty, Laura comes alive as the young joyous maiden making her majestic way through nature, all gold and white and rosy innocence. In his greatest and most seductive verse, color is supreme.

An examination of Laura in some of the well-known poems may give an idea of her versatile yet enduring power to induce a change in the love poet, to elicit the poem that speaks the mind of the poet to the reader he has in mind at the moment (Petrarch's goal as a writer, given in the opening letter to his collection *Rerum familiarum libri*). The three "sister" canzoni, poems 71–73, known as the "canzoni of the eyes," were undertaken to reproduce poetically the experience of the Neoplatonic intellective act in the context of a physical love. Rooted philosophically in the language of St. Augustine, they contain some important indicators for the overall design of the *Canzoniere*. In their unity they form an architecture that seems to inform the whole collection, peaking with poem 72 and its daydream of fulfillment and connecting, perhaps, with the three canzoni of the *Vita nuova*, which hold the structure of that little book in place. Yet these canzoni by Petrarch are built on shaky ground: he will insist more than a few times in their verses that there are faultlines to be discovered during his ascent of the philosophical mountain, in himself and in the unworthiness of his enterprise, that in effect, by his very nature and in the face of his lady's indifference, he cannot achieve more than brief joy in contemplation of her. In poem 125, therefore, the first of five crucial canzoni, Laura is evoked as the ear deaf to his appeals, the disdainful Daphne for whom he seeks to adjust his style. As the canzone progresses, however, a change takes place, whether within himself or within her is not revealed, yet its effects are sufficient to bring the poem to a singing conclusion. A tension is created in lines 14–26 by his dividing himself and his poetry into two, into surface (style) and inner core (meaning). Laura by analogy has her inner and outer aspects. Beginning with language that is ingeniously rough (unsophisticated or unpolished, he calls it) but etymologically rich, and which suggests that Laura herself is mysteriously deep although at present denuded of sweetness, he goes on to protest his inability to achieve the mellifluous style required to reach her heart. Only when he touches the "green shore" at line 49 does the language begin to pulsate with the energy he claims is hidden in his core in the opening lines, signaling a complete change in mood that carries him to the end of the poem (see 125.46–52). Within the space of eighty-one lines he has reversed himself, making inner outer, soothing his harsh words from an inner source of sweetness. Whether the "blessèd spirit" Laura might also share the fire and flow of lines 53 onward may be asked legitimately, and is in the final stanza; but to know more about her mystery, he concludes, would be a loss.

Poem 125 begins with a rocky ascent through the language of paradox to reach a kind of *locus amoenus* (earthly paradise) in line 49. In poem 126 (perhaps Petrarch's most famous canzone), he pauses in this place. The poem elicits felt time—a reverence for antiquity, nostalgia for the future, a passionate involvement in the continuous past that the poet writing in the present draws forth in the form of vision. The effect is that of free floating, of an eternality blessed with the beauty of the woman in her natural setting, coming, re-coming and reigning whether he lives or dies. Although his past is unrecoverable—that brief golden age he describes in the first stanza—it lives as narrative in the music of imperfect, hence still unfinished verbs and in gerunds whose caressing motion is an invitation to oblivion. The beauty of the lady in lines 40–52 forces an instant and powerful response; it is impossible to resist her, not to behold her compelling reality. Although the poet speaks of an antiquity suggestive of ruin in stanza 1 and a future so remote and sugar-coated that it skirts maudlinism in stanza 3, in stanza 4 he transcends it all by performing an act of love most chastely before our eyes. And although it is clear that the act is autoerotic (all the canzone takes the form of wishful thinking), the woman's power to focus love and pity on herself to the exclusion of all else overwhelms any sly motive the author may have had to disparage himself. Petrarch's discursive style in this poem is quite different from Dante's in the providentially beautiful "Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare" of *Vita nuova XXVI*, but its core message is the same. The truth lies in divine love residing in the lady; form lies in the lady, and the literal meaning that is the husk of a man's life provides the context for her coming.

Poem 127 begins a kind of dismantling process of the lovely vision he has just created in poem 126, although it may be the most perfectly constructed of Petrarch's poems. Third in a series of five major canzoni, it precedes "Italia mia," Petrarch's final patriotic effort in which he begs his countrymen to resist decline, warring factions, and narrow personal interests to begin a peaceful healing and restoration of their noble culture. Much that may be puzzling in this canzone is explained in the language of "Italia mia"; what appears to be nostalgia for his youth and innocence is instead a sad commentary on the state of the world as he finds it. Modesty that declined ("that flowered once, then grew beyond," l. 40) implies a new reality, the inverse of the sentimental images he summoned in poem 126. An unresponsive Laura seems to represent a world on the verge of being swept away by inexorable forces (see 127.43–48). The snow of innocence melts from the heat of a sun that strikes (*percossa*) almost cruelly. The eyes dim from this sun too strong for comfort. Laura at hand, reified by the imagination in poem 126, might as well be invisible, "so that forgetfulness means nothing" (54). In comparison with the sensual *oblio* of his vision in 126.56, the word here seems abstract, relegated to the day he will be delivered of life. And yet Petrarch cannot leave his Laura to languish in this reality; he infuses new life into her beauty with the final lines of the canzone (71–90) so that we may forget what he started out to say, which is that the background on which he paints his palimpsest is infernal. He comes to the end of poem 127 bearing surreal images taken from Scripture, so lovely that they obliterate the vision of the aging woman, the overblown flowers, blinding sun, and suggestion of decadence that came before. He does it repeatedly in the *Canzoniere*, as if pulling coals from the fire to save for the next day and the next poem, the next envisioning of Laura.

The young maiden restored to wholeness remains the most enduring figure in the *Canzoniere*, the one who inspires Petrarch's most sublime flights—a daughter sometimes joyous, sometimes disdainful, sad or contemplative, sometimes radiant with divine light, in whom he invests his most tender love. Later, the consoling or gently reproving wife and mother will make an appearance, in his dreams after Laura's death has turned the land into a desert. But another personification, a negative side of Laura, is present as a figure almost as powerful as the daughter: that of Medusa, who might be termed Laura's death aspect. It is a factor that seems to set Petrarch's *bella donna* apart as an anomaly in the romance form for all she resembles and provides a gloss on the cold maiden of Dante's "stony rhymes." This aspect of Laura appears to be a mask Petrarch uses in order to deliver an apocalyptic message, making his Medusa figure an icon to be displayed and disarmed. It is as if Laura has three faces: one real that he loves in a creaturely way, one surreal that he fears and hates in a salutary manner, and one entirely spiritual from whom he seeks comfort.

Petrarch needed such an elusive three-sided female persona, one in whom to invest a wide spectrum of meanings; but just as much he needed a male persona whom he might use as a stand-in for himself, a fictional character who would resemble him as poet-lover-seeker (with the traditional sets of reactions these roles implied) but who would also possess vices and virtues familiar to every man or woman as arising from common human stuff. That Petrarch was constructing in his writings a persona distinct from himself out of the materials of his life can be seen in his letters, the *Rerum familiarum libri* and the *Rerum senilium libri*. These give an epic account of his life and thought interwoven with what he called the "multicolored threads" of a rich variety of subject matter, amplified in later years with a number of additions that were proven to be fictitious by Giuseppe Billanovich in 1947. In both collections, the *Familiares* and the *Canzoniere*, spiritual progress is gained ultimately through reassessment, reorganization and pruning, but also through interpolation of edited and interpretive material that calls attention not only to the individual as a unique person but to the man as a reflection of his time. Such material in the letters, brought into close focus in the lyrics, suggests that Petrarch conceived the idea early in life to style himself deliberately as the Augustinian fated man, one who, at least in part, cannot assert control over his passions, who seeks the new and the strange for its own sake. Behind this mask a more integrated personality relied on the humor, curiosity, and intelligence of his friends and correspondents to read between the lines and decide for themselves if the voice that was speaking was the poet's or the actor's. For example, his eye for the absurd and ear for the melodramatic were used to advantage in many instances in both lyrics and letters where he assumes poses that can only elicit disbelief or laughter from the reader, poses of self-aggrandizement, vanity, coy modesty, extreme reticence (masking irony), fussy opinionatedness, pessimism or servility, embroidered upon out of a desire to amuse or teach a moral lesson. The dark unhappy truth was treated differently, however; this was confined to "the middle part," so-called by Petrarch because of its inherent weakness and tendency to mystification (see *Familiares* I, 1). These were letters and poems written during periods when he could not cope with so many reverses and with the losses to death and misfortune of so many friends and relatives. Like the "corruptible" middle part of Plato's *Republic,* they speak of excess, doubt, and labyrinthine suffering.

Petrarch's self-dramatization goes far deeper than caricature in the *Canzoniere.* Following the satiric canzone, poem 23, in which a series of transformations forces not only a new and strange conjunction of well-known Ovidian myths but a disturbing psychic break with myth itself, Petrarch seems to shrink from connection with the past in poem 37, to reach a peak of alienation from history in poem 50 (the five stanzas of the canzone a decline of significant models from the dawn to the dusk of poetry), then suggest, with a pretense of drawing the line of skirmish in poem 70 (his manifesto), that the fatal weakness in the organism resides in the nature of love poetry itself. Like Baudelaire, he not only confronts a flawed reality but identifies with it completely, as if the secret to moral renewal were in recognizing decadence as both enemy and nourisher of art. In the "canzoni of the eyes," poems 71–73, an early ascent-summit-descent experience, he begins again at the beginning, centering on his first encounter with Laura and her meaning for him but concluding with her essentially limited power to redeem him in a conventional sense. Poems that seem to aim for the sublime, they raise more questions than they answer about the nature of his religious experience and his powers to put a language to it. Perhaps his best-known poetic excursion up the mountain, poem 129, fails in consummation at a half-way point because the poet reaches a plateau where he burrows inward toward a green thought, as if into Dante's womblike Valley of the Princes in the *Purgatorio.* From there, where he can still find the form of Laura in his visible surroundings, he regards the high, inaccessible peaks and begins to measure his losses.

This very persona has succeeded in obscuring Petrarch's message for the general reader over the ensuing centuries. What were clearly radical views in the early and later Renaissance (according to Frances Yates, the heretic philosopher Giordano Bruno used Petrarchan conceits as emblems for his ideas in his hermetic work *Eroici furori*) lost their sting as time passed, merging with the ancient stream of laments that few still examine closely for their historical targets. Following in the path of Dante, whose *Vita nuova* created a whole myth about its author with a few sketchy details, Petrarch made his figure easy to stereotype by extending his fiction even into his letters. What must have been required in the way of self-discipline to carry out such a self-parody—to determine the persona who would best express his convictions but in a perverse and cogent way so as to maintain both the absurdity and credibility of his character—is hinted at in more than one passage in the letters where he speaks of the "double task" of maintaining a high moral and philosophical tone while aiming at the lesser art of accommodating to the audience, rhetoric's aim of winning arguments and impressing the naive as well as the intelligentsia. Such duplicity carries over into poem 28, for example, where he concludes with a joke at his own expense about his first duty, which is to woo the lady while others fight God's war.

From the beginning Petrarch seems to have recognized that he would become identified with his doppelgänger as his life progressed. In the letter to Giacomo Colonna denying that he had tried to "fool the world" with his Laura, he reveals himself in a backhanded manner: "If on this dubious, slippery, questionable course, a man should be so clever, by nature or study, as to dodge the world's wiles and cheat the world itself, by outwardly resembling the common man but inwardly keeping his own character, what would you say of him? Where can we find such a man? He would need a superior nature, mature sobriety, and much shrewdness in his judgment of others. But this is how you describe me!" (*Familiares* II, 9). People read his love poems and revered him for the human interest in his story, which then became a substitute for his own spiritual and intellectual self.

Any survey of literary history reveals that Petrarch did not begin with whole cloth when he pieced together the components of his persona. He had available to him a complex set of authorial masks to assume, some of which he unearthed himself from obscurity, others of which were already well known—easily recognized and understood by his peers. The *Canzoniere* offers itself not only as a log of his time and handbook of lyric forms but also as a textbook of literary *topoi*—topics which poets and rhetoricians had addressed as far back as the first recorded poem. Durling (p. 9) lists a "repertory of situations" Petrarch inherited from the romance tradition to which he lends his intensely original interpretations: "love at first sight, obsessive yearning and lovesickness, frustration, love as parallel to feudal service; the lady as ideally beautiful, ideally virtuous, miraculous, beloved in Heaven, and destined to early death; love as virtue, love as idolatry, love as sensuality; the god of love with his arrows, fire, whips, chains; war with the self—hope, fear, joy, sorrow." The poet may strike many attitudes springing from the course of real events (since his own history is woven into the fabric of his fiction) but also from states of mind and emotions every love poet was expected to experience. Petrarch seems to have drawn a vast stock of subject matter from earlier traditions; rhetorically there is little of the work that cannot be traced to the literature preceding him.

Some of the prominent themes Petrarch drew from the past include the belief in the divinity of poets, along with the conviction that poets and leaders (*capitani*) together can raise up humanity; the identification of love with creative vision (the rapture and clear-sightedness of love); claims to be unique in his age symbolized in the *Canzoniere* by the phoenix; the intention to consecrate the name of the idealized love object, first mentioned in poem 5 and recapitulated in poem 297; the habit of recapitulation itself; vaunting of the anger and pride of the poet (*genus irritabile vatum*)—poses closely connected with a humility that requires silence on the one hand and speaking out about one's knowledge on the other; affectations of modesty, trepidation, submission, and incapacity (*mediocritas mea*)—forms of self-disparagement often assumed in imperial Rome (notably by Cicero), in which the satirist makes a gesture of submission to the emperor in order to gain an audience; the consolatory pose "everyone must die"; the pose of the *puer senex*, or wisdom of age in youth (see poems 182 and 215); self-admonitions to be brief and not cause boredom to the lady (see poems 82, 130, and 359); the appeal to those sensitive to sweetness; the invocation of nature and the idea of *l'aura* as carrier of the bitter and the sweet; the use of the book as a compendium of knowledge patterned as a weaving or mosaic; the habit of enumeration and "erotic intellectual trifling"; inclusion of "rhetorical bravura pieces" in which compendious knowledge is jumbled together (as in the *frottola* [tall tale] of poems 105 or 135); the practice of listing impossibilities, with a major model in the Book of Revelation; the topos of "the world turned upside down," alluding to the degeneracy of empire, Church, and monasticism; the satirical use of the *feria sexta aprilis* (Petrarch's fateful day of poems 3 and 211), mentioned by Archilochus in reporting the eclipse of the sun on 6 April 648 B.C. as an example of Zeus turning off light because of the evil rampant at the time; and finally the use of the laurel itself, not only for its self-mastering and triumphal symbolism but also for the challenge it carries to the temporal gods (going back to Hesiod's poet stepping forth in the *Theogony* brandishing the laurel wand).

Because Petrarch borrowed so extensively from the learning of the past, assuming so many familiar poses, does not mean that he was plagiarizing in the sense that we know it, or even that he was being disingenuous. Unlike any poet before him, he had searched through the libraries of Europe for writings of the ancients which he hoped to bring to renown for the enrichment of all. According to his own literary ethic, he was discovering and giving new life to a continuous tradition that could be perpetuated only by being recast in a valid new form. As a young candidate for the laureate at the peak of his idealism, Petrarch defined this process with the analogy of the bee and honey, learning being a gathering and digesting of history and literature and writing poetry the formation of a new essence. In his youthful days of glory, however, he had not been stung by disappointment. The mature artist seems to have begun to have second thoughts about such a benign approach to the creative process, and the bee and honey image was amplified in the *Canzoniere* by the cuckoo bird who settles in other birds' nests (poem 165), the feeding bird watched by a beast of prey, or the fattening lamb awaiting sacrifice (poem 207), the lame ox chasing a breeze (poem 239), or the flashing fish mysteriously deep but contained within green river banks (poem 257). As scholar and disseminator of classical ideas, or as a humble Christian seeking his fortune in high places of intrigue, as a masquerader in other poets' cloaks, or poet-farmer turning the soil of language with the tip of his pen, Petrarch did not so much select from others as play-act with them metaphorically, especially in Part I of the work.

Although Petrarch's unearthing of the past may seem like an archeological dig, even necromancy to some, it is made coherent through a painful rethinking and reorganization in and of the poetry of the *Canzoniere* in Part II, his logic forced by the death of Laura to conform to an order "which, if we keep it in our lives, leads us to God," as St. Augustine wrote in *De ordine*. Slowly, painfully he adjusts his style to a more moderate realism, in keeping with expectations newly tempered by events (see table 2, p. xxxv). Unlike Dante's conversion in "Un solo punto" or Augustine's sudden relinquishment of self in the *Confessiones*, Petrarch's approach is gradual, following a long bumpy road over mixed terrain. In terms of style, his rebirth through self-confrontation may best be described as a kind of syncretism or reconciliation of opposing philosophical and religious principles—that is, as discord in all its ramifications brought to order. A selection of these discordances peculiarly applicable to the *Canzoniere* would be the manner in which Petrarch disconcerts, bedevils, confounds, tangles, ravels, and dements in the poetry of Part I, remedied by his arranging, disentangling, unweaving, disembroiling, and sieving in Part II. In this sense his mixed styles may all have been to the same purpose, designed as an antidote for taking contradictions too seriously, not only psychological but scriptural ones as well, such as those pagan elements in Christian writings which the Church fathers had never completely resolved.

The palinodic or recantatory poems state the problem. These are mostly sonnets in which the poet seems to give with one hand and take away with the other, as when he begins poem 85 with the words "I have always loved" and poem 86 with "I have always hated," or when he alternates between joy and despair within the space of a poem. The very first sonnet has been described as palinodic since he discounts an untold number of poems that succeed it as a brief dream of pleasure for which he feels shame. An extraordinary disparity in style and tone may be found in sonnets that follow abruptly one after the other, such as poems 34 and 35, the first an invocation of Apollo and the second a devout elegy that has no apparent connection with what came just before. These disjunctions become less frequent as the work progresses, even rare in Part II (after the series ending with poem 270), but a variety of style remains the rule.

Other characteristic sonnet styles are the epistles, prayers, conundrums, or conceits (a nest or tangle of thoughts artfully woven together), paeans, and anecdotes; the erotic poems, laments, satiric barbs; the bucolic, allegorical, and olympian poems; matched sets of two and three sonnets alluding to the same crisis; poems evoking natural wonders, myths, and great men; interior dialogues, and many poems of sage observation concluding with an aphorism. A typical gesture is the poem that heralds a new turning, either in style or life-course, poem 54 being a prominent example. The first of these sudden departures are poems 2 and 6, followed by so many others that one becomes attuned to their appearances and almost able to anticipate them. However, palinodes, tergiversations, discordances, paradoxes, and oxymorons are the showy displays of the *Canzoniere.* Equally important but not so startling are the parallels between groups of sonnets (a series in Part I that mirrors one in Part II), logical correspondences within individual sonnets, and concordances or repetitions of individual terms in widely separated poems that trace a generally positive undercurrent in the work, in spite of surface appearances, toward a live-and-let-live openness.

In considering the degree of gravity of individual Petrarchan sonnets, we might ask: does he always write with some major irony or minor puzzle or pun in mind, some bit of jollity hidden by deadly seriousness, or is there always some tragicomic turn waiting to be taken and leading in a direction other than the apparent one? As early as poem 35, for example, a sonnet that has been praised for its beauty and profundity, his self-conscious bearing and gravity of tone seem to conceal from the literal-minded, but not the "knowing" world, an inner well of joy that threatens to overflow with the *allegrezza* he claims is missing from his face but which he reveals in lines 12–14. Since he had transformed himself into the laurel in poem 23 (that is, he became the poem), the interfaces of poem 35 are already known to have multiplied. The surface of Laura's face and his meet in the intellect, a green and fruitful place in spite of the wild and inhospitable aspect of the populated world as he finds it. This poem invites us to consider that its inner correspondences may be reversible, as they will be in others to follow which mask joy with sorrow, laughter with tears. (Poem 102 speaks openly about such masking.)

Overtly humorous poems, such as the canzoni numbered 105, 119, 135, 359, and 360, are gently self-mocking, each one unique in the way it utilizes old material freshly. The mock-heroic sonnet (poems 115, 141, 151, 175–177, 180, and 189) seems especially to have delighted Petrarch in the 56-sonnet series that culminates in the canzone numbered 206. (It was in that series also that he began to develop his more sophisticated manner.) Later in Part I, in the 24-sonnet series added in the last year of his life, his humor darkens, his style becomes gothic. (Petrarch did not necessarily add poems to the collection in the order in which they were written. Recent studies [particularly that by Wilkins, 1951] show that he held many poems back until he found a place for them, reworked some until well along in the process, and positioned a number of early poems among later ones according to their style or content rather than their historical sequence. Some of the so-called anniversary poems are out of chronological order within the context of the *Canzoniere* itself.) Swept by black thoughts and fears of Laura's death, he descends from a bittersweet peak in 248.2 ("Venga a mirar costei" [Come and gaze on her]) to a place of grief, confusion and sacrifice. In poem 261, when he invites the "ladies" to study Laura's glory, her qualities and effects seem to add up to zero, in poem 262 to a suicidal and punishing virtue, and in poem 263 to a dangerous impracticality. None of her wonders in poem 261 can be conceived of, imitated, explained, or learned. The ironic sense is gained from knowing that for Petrarch these issues were no joking matter. Although he seems to play with the idea of Laura's death (in poem 254 he announces that his little *favola* is complete, his time is up), we know from information he gives us both in the text and out of it that the year of Laura's disappearance was that of the plague, fate's way of wiping the slate clean, good and evil alike. He pretends to be unaware on one level, prescient on another, as Boccaccio's young aristocrats were in the *Decameron*, exiles from the reality of the plague but unconscious realists to the conditions leading up to it.

Preoccupation with physical death is perhaps the preeminent subject matter of the poems in this period (1347–1348), far outstripping others in any quantitative sense. A transition period in the collection, its importance for the poet is reflected in the fact that he commemorates the twentieth anniversary of his loving Laura (1347) twice, in poems 212 and 221 (see table 2). Although Part II (poems "on the death of Laura") consists of one hundred and three poems, the two hundred and sixty-three "on the life of Laura" fall into the shadow of death more often than not. It is interesting, in fact, how Part II seems to contain so many poems that confirm life, quite as many erotic poems as Part I, and three canzoni that sing Laura's praises as beautifully as anywhere, for example, that on falling in love with love again, poem 270. Grief has its other side; loss of Laura brings a deepening of devotion and a growing appreciation of friendship, less self-mystification, and a clearer sense of boundaries. The satire after Laura dies seems less vitriolic and aims at folk humor or old men's pleasures. Even in the final poems, which Petrarch rearranged to show a more spiritual progression (so he said), his wit remains irrepressible, his consciousness of the *umano* at its peak. Like Cyrano de Bergerac when he is dying, Petrarch's persona knows when he finally has the ear of the world and gains his second wind, saving some of his panache for the end, for those poems that will vindicate him. Style supplies its own history in the *Canzoniere*, reaching deep into the past in the first part of the work, becoming increasingly fertile and experimental in the central portion, and turning more toward a common humanity at the end. Even as he pictures Laura being welcomed as the new queen of heaven in poem 346, his vision has its lowly components, its ties to the everyday. Poems 359 and 360 find him humbled, childlike; in poem 361 he resigns himself to the fact that he cannot buy more life in this world, although love still resonates in his mind if not his loins; and in poem 363, by deferring the final reckoning to God, this solitary, elemental man accepts the immanence of his dying.

Petrarch's heaven in these late sonnets is lowercase, the celestial music soft-pedaled by a Socratic irony that permits the dying man his commonality, his all too physical mock-up of the afterlife. In them he falls back on a simple faith unsupported by elaborate metaphysical systems. Only the stunning apologia of the closing canzone, "Vergine bella" (poem 366) finally brings vision back from errant wish-fulfillment to the biblical model of Revelation. And yet while Laura, human love, beauty, and all the hubris and flare of the struggling poet are subsumed in Revelation's enduring truth in this concluding hymn, Petrarch's tinkering with its symbolism reveals a certain intransigence. To the very end he shapes form and meaning to reveal in the poem's numerology an inherent weakness in his argument, reflecting in the eighth stanza the face of the proud dissenter. Mary's integrating force defeats presumption, however, holding him at bay—at the tip of her foot—and the poem ends with reverence and compliance.

With dismissive gestures, Petrarch seems to cast off Laura in the final poems of the *Canzoniere*, as if he had exhausted her usefulness. Of the three aspects of madonna, only the motherly counselor remains. Laura as a source of pleasure has faded to a brief sight in 350.13 and, as a threat of death (Medusa), to a cause for repentance in the recantatory closing poem, number 366. These disparagements of her importance are puzzling, since it is only natural to anticipate that the Laura he adored and praised from the start would emerge from the whole body of poems as more than a discredited sign of the poet's folly and weakness. The question arises, what reason did Petrarch have for discounting her other than the conventional one of spurning the "world" and belatedly turning to matters of the spirit?

In the congedo of the canzone numbered 23, he suggested what it was about his vernacular poetry that set him apart from the Greek and Latin epic poets he tried to emulate in *Africa*, his unfinished Latin poem:

> Canzone, never was I that golden cloud
> that once descended in a precious rain
> so as to quench in part Jove's burning flame;
> but surely I was flame lit by Love's glance,
> I was the bird that rises highest through the air
> raising the one whom in my words I honor;
> and no strange shape could ever make me leave
> the first laurel, for still its lovely shade
> clears every lesser pleasure from my heart. (161–169)

The flame within, lit by love of Laura and kept burning until late in the work, was his desire to convey the poetry of praise to the "highest" realm; but no heroes were to be born out of it as Perseus was from Jove's "gold cloud" in the myth of Danaë. The canzone itself, for all the high purpose of its closing lines, is cut off in the freeze-frame of Actaeon's flight in its last metamorphosis (Diana's punishment for his having glimpsed her naked), as inconclusive as the *Canzoniere* will be upon reaching its final turning toward self-justification in poem 360. A microcosm within the macrocosm that is the finished work of 366 poems (a plot within a plot), poem 23 ends with a cri de coeur, but a vain one. Like the silent scream of Ovid's Actaeon ("I am Actaeon, I am he!") as he fled his own hounds in the form of a stag, Petrarch's attempts to be heard will be stifled by the very medium in which he writes. His futile cry will finally be articulated in

360.149 ("Ben me la die', ma tosto la ritolse" [He gave me her but quickly took her back!]), as if Petrarch meant to lament that in undertaking to praise his fierce goddess in bold, concise language he has come up against some other truth, has failed to communicate her meaning to a ravenous and uncomprehending world, has even in some way murdered his own creation through his love of her.

The *Canzoniere* demonstrates in particular how sentimental or physical love of woman may seize the imagination and cause the poet's desire to speak honestly, of human and divine beauty, to gó astray, becoming disingenuous in spite of itself; and how, when that same love skirts too close to sacrilege or blasphemy (an underlying theme of poem 23) his efforts to clarify his meanings lead to obfuscation and irrelevance. In general it shows how language has been diluted by the derivative and contaminated by the figurative to the point where its terminology no longer can say what love poets would have it say without risking misinterpretation or vulgarity—and what is worse, banality. Boccaccio testified to the more ribald truths in his "Author's Conclusion" to the *Decameron* (p. 685), defending the "liberties" he took with his stories:

> And if they do contain a few expressions or little words here and there that are somewhat freer than a prude might find proper (ladies of the type who weigh words more than deeds and who strive more to seem good than to be so), let me say that it is no more improper for me to have written these words than for men and women at large to fill their everyday speech with such words as 'hole,' 'peg,' 'mortar,' 'pestle,' 'wiener,' and 'fat sausage,' and other similar expressions.

Boccaccio excuses himself on the grounds that "even more outrageous stories are to be found in the Church's annals than in my own writings," referring first to the inevitable pitfalls in vernacular language, rooted as it often is in the carnal, and perhaps second to Latin monastic texts of the late Middle Ages interwoven with sexual material that caressed God's blessings too sensuously, particularly in writings about the Holy Family. However, double entendre and widespread signaling of concupiscence were only some of the dangers to be encountered in literature. The imprecision of grammar and ambiguous syntax were also pitfalls. Petrarch uses and abuses these and other faults of speech in a number of ways in the first part of the *Canzoniere*, inflating his metaphors, for example, in poems 176–178 and 189; demonstrating vacuousness and redundancy in poems 74, 170, 184, 205, 217, and 219; and exploiting the sexual connotations of words all through the collection. The long sonnet cycles of the middle part of the work (following poem 150 and ending with 263) often play with language to the point of parody, using its structures to show how it may strain under too great a weight or describe the confused mental state of the protagonist or reveal the innate propensity of words to transform themselves when met within a new context.

Such threats to signification, as Gellrich has shown, had long been medieval preoccupations, to be remedied by the search for a pure, original tongue through which the holy subject might interact with earthly texts while yet remaining virginal. For Hugh of St. Victor, for example, seeking the way back to the primal tongue entailed coming "through the word to a concept, through a concept to a thing, through the thing to its idea, and through its idea [arriving] at truth" (Gellrich, p. 101). It could be said that Petrarch began the *Canzoniere* with one such noble goal in mind: the desperate love of the poet would be put to the task of finding the one and only meaning of the word. But a penchant for exploring etymology and the underpinnings of speech opened up intriguing complexities early in the work, beginning with the evocation of the name LAURETA in poem 5:

When I summon my sighs to call for you,
with that name Love inscribed upon my heart,
in LAUdable the sound at the beginning
of the sweet accents of that word come forth.

Your REgal state which I encounter next
doubles my strength for the high enterprise,
but "TAcitly," the end cries, "for her honor
needs better shoulders for support than yours."

And so, to LAUd and to REvere the word
itself instructs whenever someone calls you,
O lady worthy of all praise and honor,

unless, perhaps, Apollo be offended
that morTAl tongue be so presumptuous
to speak of his eternally green boughs.

By dividing the name into the three syllables LAU, RE, and TA, the poem points to the worthy but chancy goal of completing the sentence (*copulatio* of subject and object) without having compromised its high subject matter. Poem 5 outlines a doubly difficult task. In order to bridge the contrarities of language with a "smoothly apportioned construction," as Hugh of St. Victor had called the superstructure of Scripture, Petrarch had first to reconcile fundamental opposites with occult skills. Following St. Augustine, Hugh had written in his *Didascalicon* of Scripture's *aedificium*:

> The foundation is in the earth, and it does not always have smoothly fitted stones. The superstructure rises above the earth, and it demands a smoothly apportioned construction. Even so the Divine Page, in its literal sense, contains many things which seem both to be opposed to each other and, sometimes, to impart something that smacks of the absurd or the impossible. But the spiritual meaning admits no opposition; in it, many things can be different from one another, but none can be opposed. (Quoted in Gellrich, p. 133)

Presuming that Petrarch set out to highlight the spiritual meaning of sacred language and became sidetracked by its contrarities and "things that smack of the absurd"—the peculiar departures from logic buried in the vocabulary he was using, for example—it is possible to read a subtext into the *Canzoniere* that explains many of its disjunctions as picaresque or intuitive researches into verbal ground a fourteenth-century poet could only guess at from the vernacular language he had to work with. In the course of the work, "stones" which the poet selects to form his superstructure seem to become progressively more riddled with doubt about the wider implications of terms for Laura's cultured social virtues (e.g., chastity, honor, humility, honesty, valor, beauty, and grace), more covered over with verbal briars of a rough, barbaric sort (his prickles, burrs, and arid outgrowths, images that continually recall the wasteland), with the result that they prove at first testing in Part I of the work not to support belief. The reader is struck again and again with what appears to be skepticism on the part of the poet, what DeSanctis referred to as a shrinking back from the sublime. The search for a convincing representation of virtue is made into allegory for the failure of reason to find definition, to maintain a brave and steady light in the midst of ghostly appearances. The last sonnet in Part I, poem 263, therefore ends quixotically. The poem is top-heavy, its triumph seeming hollow as a sequel to what has come before. This may be why in the next canzone, "I' vo pensando" (I go on thinking), he is as sunk in his moral dilemma as ever.

Because of the inherent ambivalence of the language Petrarch chooses to use at many points in the *Canzoniere*, no doubt partly in response to everyday usage he could not resist recording, his critical sense takes over from the romantic early in the work. The final lines of poem 16, a sonnet cherished over the centuries for its pathos and composed for the most part of humble physical details, seem deliberately to trivialize Platonic ideality (even risking blasphemy, as some have noted), as if to bring attention to the folklore built up around it. The pilgrim, the image of Christ, the woman, and the desiring poet make of their elements a strange mix—one rough communal cloth. What Petrarch seems to be saying in poem 16 is, look at the literal earthiness from which this concept of *vera forma* springs. Inquiry leads him, as it did Socrates and Dante, into the fundaments of speech. From poem 5 onward, an honorable end is frequently called upon to justify the means the poet employs to redeem the whole; 5.7–8, 23.31, 140.14, and 207.65 are statements of this principle. But sometimes in pursuit of a virtuous human love, honor proves to be difficult to recall in the face of a complex reality. Eventually the poet languishes, his chosen medium of love poetry having reached a blind alley, as in poem 224. Because he is deprived by unrequited love of the power to bring his unique vision into focus, to decisively communicate, he falls into the fragmentary, the base, the infinitely reductive. Coherence is sacrificed late in Part I and not restored until he purges himself of his youthful pretensions of grandeur in poems 323 and 332.

The *Canzoniere*'s progressions suggest that Petrarch diverged from the grand tradition of literature, from heroics and architectonics, partly in order to create an ingenious thematic sourcebook of poetic language, one that developed into completeness—from grandiose assumptions to questioning to cynicism to acceptance of limitations—almost in spite of itself. Later, when he began arranging poems into finished collections, he came to regard his sonnets as *nugellae*, figuratively "trifles" but etymologically the buried seeds he hoped would germinate in other poets, even if the epic style of Homer, Virgil, and Dante proved to be beyond him. His poems offer little clues that lead out of the labyrinth of reasoning, each connected to the other in a contextual sense through its innate particularities, each offering its potential for flowering into beauty or for illuminating the dangers encountered in the writing process. In his honest appraisals of poetry's power and shortcomings, Petrarch shows how an enduring model of expression might emerge.

Mazzotta (p. 77) writes that for Petrarch, "language *betrays* desire, both in the sense that it reveals desire, is its spy, and because language bears an essential otherness to the desire that generates it." However, such treachery can be intentional or unintentional; in Petrarch's verse in particular, inadvertent betrayals often result from diverse readings of terms. What is this *mal* of his anyway? (The term appears over sixty times in the *Canzoniere*.) Perhaps the principal red herring in love poetry, it can be translated as "harm," "pain," "weakness," "illness," or "evil." Reducing its sense in every case to concupiscence (the ecclesiastical meaning to which many commentators refer) confuses the issue, never more so than in reading the *Canzoniere*, where sex often seems to be the last thing on his mind. Pinpointing the true and only meaning of *mal* equates with finding the ultimate meaning of Laura, a sense that shades into or emerges from the character of the individual poem, from where it stands in the text, and from what it says about where it stands. One ultimately weighs the burden of evidence to reach definition.

Petrarch's modus operandi always was to send the mind back to the genesis of language in nature and in God—practically speaking back to the poems preceding, with their categories carefully established and metaphorical structures precise and uncompromising. The first ten sonnets, for example, may have been intended to be paradigmatic, to correspond with medieval number symbolism. Poem 1, an epilogue or exergue, speaks summarily from outside the work; poem 2 begins his history as set into motion by poem 1; poem 3 links the soul in time with the demiurge Love; poem 4 establishes a foundation in time and place; poem 5 envisions the beloved in a worldly setting; poem 6 succumbs to her in rapture; poem 7 states his mortal goal as a poet; poem 8 shows the spiritual plight of one devout man caught in the world's "last days"; poem 9 prophesies the root cause for his falling short in artistic terms; and poem 10, with its note of preparation for a second coming, enlists all the poem's elements in the service of the friends of Christ. When he wanders off the well-traveled path, as he does in his long sonnet series (see table 1, p. xii), it is to escape an impasse. What seems conflicted in his thought processes at first, too absolutist or self-defeating in early poems such as 22, 30, 66, and 80 (sestinas which seek to fix, in their six recurring rhymes, six shades of meaning), begins to loosen and become more supple in these stylistic excursions. What distinguishes a sonnet series such as poems 215–236, for example, is the way Petrarch makes a penance of experimentation in a group of twenty-two poems as rich with earthy vocabulary as any in the work. Again, in poems 150–205 and 333–358, it is possible to recognize the free-thinker at work, pushing the limits of doctrine. Each sonnet in these series has its own purpose, yet in their variety they reveal the ways in which language can be precise or made vague and subjective, both enriched and debased by terms meant to serve temporal aims.

In a philosophic framework Petrarch shows how poetic language sells itself short by mesmerizing itself with beauty and exhausting itself with hyperbole. That he succeeds in doing this without losing the poem's value as a mode of communication is a measure of his power as an artist. In poem 248—and in poem 261, a companion to that sonnet—after he has despaired of a response from the world that might reconfirm the viability of his vision (Laura is rumored to have died), he turns back to the Dantesque model as if putting *la bella donna* up for a mock sale, advertising her beauty and virtue one last time before death overtakes her. It is not that the poetry in these sonnets fails to please, but that it hints at a bitter truth with its vain repetitions; in a rhetorical burst of energy the poems emphasize the futility of relying on such model human perfection in the face of pitiless forces. If the reader is moved to wonder how these sonnets late in Part I are related, it is because history (in this case, political failure as well as the Black Death) intrudes on the poet's dream of persuading us with his eloquence; it fractures all reason and gentility.

In order to perceive how this happens, one may regard the *Canzoniere* as a corpus (a term Petrarch used to describe his collected letters) and the middle part from poems

150–270 as its inner vitals, and therefore to anticipate that its core poetry will be expressed in language "related to the subject matter of our discourse," as Lady Philosophy explained in Boethius's work, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. Without a doubt, the first part of the work contains the most brilliant poems, products of an intellect in high gear informed by the data of his cultivated senses. When he sets off on his travels into lower forms of poetic expression, however, the cerebral will be assisted by gut reactions, so that the poet's tendency to gorge on everything at the table in the 56-sonnet cycle (poems 150–205) will be followed by the urgent need to purge himself of impurity in poems 215–236. There, in the interest of truth, he states the most fundamental facts of his wretchedness. With the mention of wormwood in poem 215, for example, he begins a series in which images of evil, death, defecation, and delirium create in him and his verse a paroxysm of suffering. Poem 217 finds him in a pit of self-disgust, its terms *querela*, *fervide*, *fessi* (an unusual form of *facessi*, that is, "would make," which appears in lines 3 and 7), *l'empia nube*, *rompesse a l'aura*, and *cruda* sardonically juxtaposed with the last tercet's *divina* ... *beltate*. Like poem 135, the confessional canzone that precedes his scurrilous attack on the papal court in poems 136–141, these sonnets serve a purpose—to shock and fix the attention of his audience on his audacity, particularly in poems 227–229 with their frankly Dionysian elements, from earliest times accompaniments of war and disease. They prepare the way for the art of poems 237–239, poems perhaps closest to his heart. Poem 236 wryly sums up the rationale for his daring. Nothing in the work will match the 22-sonnet cycle for explicitness, although poems 333–358 resemble it in their proximity to death, and the last sestina, poem 332, will perfect its analogies by emptying him even of the will to shock.

Language in the *Canzoniere* naturally departs from itself, beginning with the lover's falling away from innocence in poem 2 and leading eventually deep into the matrix of self. Petrarch's peculiar genius reveals itself in the way he is able to make his waywardness relevant, to seize on the word or metaphor that will test Hugh of St. Victor's principle that although physical or moral particulars may be absurd or different from one another (*fuoco*/fire and *ghiaccio*/ice, or *onestate*/chastity and *leggiadria*/charm), on some level of understanding they are held in tension. Both intestinal and moral pain, as well as the sensation of love, oscillate between freezing and burning, holding the person to the test of the body. An appearance of virtue may cover a multitude of common, ordinary sins, and charm may be a veneer over the most cruel and base nature—may even coexist with it in apparent harmony. (Petrarch found in Cicero's letters to Atticus, discovered by him in 1345, unnerving discrepancies between the public and the private man that forced him to reassess his early high opinion of Cicero.) Cicero had demonstrated the manner in which *honestum* and *utile* were necessarily linked attributes of the public man, not opposed as they might seem to be. A person with power over others covered up the inconvenient realities in order to function honorably. The poet, however, could not embrace the lie; his duty was to reveal truth even at the expense of his credibility.

Petrarch may originally have acquired his license to simultaneously reveal and conceal human nature (articulated in poem 5) from Cicero's definition of etymology: that the attributes and etymologies of Laura's name are synonymous. In other words, the varied outgrowth of forms (*Laureta*/Lauretta, *l'aura*/breeze, *laurea*/laurel wreath, *laureto*/laurel grove, *l'auro*/gold, *l'aureo*/highly praised, *l'aurora*/dawn, *l'òra*/hour) and the roots of *laur*, *lavr*, and *labr*, are all pertinent to his theme. They function as recurring but ambiguous factors to be explored along with the nature of her idealized qualities, virtues that will have to be tested through the power of her contrasting effects (to freeze fire and to burn snow, to bind and to loosen, to harden and to melt) in multiple ways throughout the *Canzoniere*. But because many of the ingredients of this mix are evanescent or working at evident cross-purposes, they do not coalesce into belief; instead they are held in abeyance until the very end of the work as if the poet were waiting for some external force to materialize by which they might all gain definition.

What Petrarch does with the word *ira* (anger) serves as a good example. As a motivating factor in the *Canzoniere*, anger could not be more important since it combines with his love in a potent mix vented often as "useless tears" but on some memorable occasions as overt or covert attacks on his enemies. However, the *ira* that Petrarch inherited from the Provençal departed from the wrathful, sometimes purifying emotion in Latin to veer into ambiguity, to that feeling aroused in the poet by a lady who disdains him, namely, a feeling of "distress" or "sadness" close to sloth (*acedia*). Petrarch restores *ira* to its Latin sense by making it the centerpiece of his Babylon sonnets, poems 136–138. True, he is obliged to atone for having lost his temper; a series of poems will eventually follow in which he and Laura share a disabling kind of rage, climaxing with poem 232 in which it becomes clear that he experiences the Latin sense while acknowledging its limitations as a virtue: when anger arises from righteous indignation with inhuman conditions, Petrarch implies, it has its uses (Dante said the same in the *Inferno*), but as distress and sadness or destructive rage, it can be a vice. He does not completely overcome it, in spite of what he says in poem 232. Anger to be used for polemical purposes simmers just under the surface until late in the work, when in poem 356 he providentially turns it on himself to cure himself of it once and for all.

Petrarch obviously meant to use some of the language of the long sonnet cycles as a vermifuge, "a *pharmakon* to be expelled with the other contaminants of his being," as St. Augustine does in the *Confessiones* (see Vance, p. 13). Yet what he does with words in the *Canzoniere*, however crudely, always teaches. In poem 360, Love accuses the poet before the Court of Justice of having sold "little words, or rather lies" when he might have been aiming for the highest goal, suggesting that he has been deceiving his readers deliberately. But the writing process, like loving, has its seductive as well as rough and polished operations; it tends to lead one astray. It becomes clear long before that late canzone that these deceptive words were meant to act as signals, as small torches lighting the poet's way through the by-ways of thought. Always look for the light within the individual word, he had learned from Virgil, somewhere under the poetic cloud. A word that is penetrated may yield another life, almost a mythology in itself that might distract from or serve his essential purpose. Some come to mind: *vendetta*, *sasso*, *scoglio*, *petra*, *fascio*, *scaltrire*, *elicere*, *scolpire*, *folcire*, *scevro*, *rappellare*, *smalto*, *verga*, *verace*, *vena*, *onore*, *pena*, *puro*, *purpureo*, *podere*; the ubiquitous *castità*, *onestà*, *ghiaccio*, *laccio*, *fuoco*, *leggiadria*, *esca*, and *albergo*. For example, the *scaltire* (to polish, to make witty or sophisticated) of 125.26 sums up in a word what he has chosen to avoid doing in the first part of the canzone; but the word also contains an oblique sense of interiority, inferiority, or deception. Since it allows for more than one meaning, it serves as a code word. A more subtle line of thought emerges from turning inward instead of proceeding directly to the right in the text. There is a metaphoric fabric which he weaves very early; all the old familiar terms of love provide the groundwork against which he superimposes his figures. These take shape out of the unusual or unique terms Petrarch uses to suggest, in their etymologies, the gist of a new line of argument. The verb form *merco* in 212.13, for example (from *mercare*, to buy), is one of a number of one-time-only terms that flicker with light under the poetic cloud of apparent meaning demanding to be examined. Yielding several lines of thought branching from its Latin root (one connecting with the *vendetta* of poem 2) the word can be read deeply not only in its literal and moral senses but in a rhetorical one as well. He invites us to consider by signaling with this word a theme he pursues until late in the collection, the economics of love. According to this science, the poet's falling in love involves a transaction. The lover offers his or her emotional and rational life to the beloved as a pledge in the hope that love will be reciprocated or, second best, that it will offer some measure of glory and fame for suffering. But a deeper wish motivates the religious poet, and that is to redeem a measure of faith in faith itself by loving her on into death, making an imaginative assault on the great metaphor of a reality "beyond." Like Derrida's "metaphor of metaphor" outside philosophical language by which that language is made to fall short, the ethereal realm lures the metaphysician or poet to overextend himself. He must describe it in language which has few terms by which to penetrate it, as Dante demonstrated in the last lines of the *Paradiso.* Dante was forced to borrow from himself, from his own store of humble mortal images, when approaching the unimaginable point of nonbeing. Such a law of diminishing linguistic returns applies to the genesis and inevitable abstraction or subtraction of Laura in the *Canzoniere* (the *hysteron-proteron* of her early death and gradual disappearance). In going beyond her death the poet can only try to breathe new life into his memory of her material being through diminishing memory itself and through the insubstantial stuff of dreams.

Petrarch followed tradition late in the *Canzoniere* by describing love's transaction as imprinting, the striking of a coin (see poems 18, 94, and 110), that is, finally effaced and melted down as he exhausts Laura's potential. When he laments in 298.8 that he has "lost the profits of my painful gains" (and demonstrates this in his syntax), he shows that her death has resulted in a severe financial setback, forcing him to begin a course of conservation and to operate marginally until the end. Part II of his life, following Laura's dying, requires an intense reassessment, especially since he had been unable to settle on a stable value for her in Part I. In several early poems he demonstrated how ornamentation (idolatry) might be improvident; poem 212, where *merco* appeared, is one of them (see also poems 146 and 157). What he does in the latter part of the *Canzoniere* is to seek distinctions between the real and the illusory image, the first derived from love of the "most human" woman, of whom Mary is Petrarch's highest representation, the other from love of the symbolic, suggestive, ambiguous, and ephemeral child-woman he can never possess. He attempts to disassociate his thought from iconographic beauty (the allure of the image) in order to regain the irreducible simplicity of a redemptive model. In poem 263, Laura "triumphant" had professed that she was bored with her beauty and had left pearls, rubies, and gold behind. Shortly after, in poem 267, she is revealed to have died. For a long time his dilemma lies in the fact that since he still loves her and by association those worldly goods she spurned, the usual sweet words only make her immateriality more painfully felt. In later sonnets the richness of his imagery, which he used as coin to buy the privilege of loving her in Part I, is seen to have made him poor, giving pleasure only to others. The actual yield with which he is left is humble: his bed, his aging body, his little fable sadly depleted.

The purging of decorative effects, of grandiose and illusory values, becomes complete with poem 323, a canzone in which Laura's death is opulently rendered in sixfold form. As mortal beauty perfected to serve a moral purpose, she could be taken only so far. Analogy may not substitute indefinitely for idea, nor may symbolic gestures suffice for acts. Poem 327 begins a winding down, demonstrating as a painful truth how a waning intensity of hope and desire and a diminishing vision contribute to the loss of lyrical intensity in his verse—how they distemper it while his faith deepens on another level. Although the first line speaks of the ancient beauties that once sparked his fire, the passive voice, past participles, the ordinariness of *l'odore* (fragrance) and *refrigerio* (coolness) stand out as new elements, the poet boldly confronting with these devices the fire and ice and sudden sweet pain of earlier poems. In effect, prosaic images slow the pace of his thought, burden it with dark fears, and weight it down with a reverse power. In the next sonnet, *tepida neve* (melting snow) contrasts with earlier snows, for example, the *tenera neve* (fresh-fallen snow) of 127.43, and the *calda neve* (warm snow) of 157.9, suggesting enervation. With a crablike motion Petrarch inches his way toward his final negation, poem 332, the double sestina in which he passes through the mirror of double death possessed only of himself to emerge into a kind of linguistic minimalism for the final steps of the journey.

These are meditations of one whose expectations are gradually being drawn from the external to the internal, emptied from Laura in order to sustain Francesco in his confrontation with his own death. By holding on to whatever verbal ground he has gained, he seems to pass through pain to achieve a measure of amused detachment from metaphysical concerns. The last long sonnet cycle of the *Canzoniere*, poems 333–358, for all its apparent high tone, jokes at the expense of mysticism. In the musings of the long-winded poet making the most of his moment, eking out his allotted days, Petrarch seems to play with the very foundations of the celestial scene—the terms built into the language by which we conceive of the hereafter—by dramatizing himself bargaining with destiny like a character out of Boccaccio, carrying the economics of salvation to questionable lengths. Although the ultimate test of the worth of these poems must lie in faith, as metaphysics they create their own ironic frame of reference—like Dante's late cantos in the *Paradiso*, they cannot be read literally without severely stretching known categories. Nevertheless, some of Petrarch's old moral terms, such as *umiltà*, *pietà*, *leggiadria*, *onore*, and *onestate* are still under active consideration late in the work. *Onestate* (chastity? honesty? *integer vitae*?) proves to be that cloak with which he enfolds the whole in poem 366, where he returns to sacred texts exclusively, making each referent in his final canzone a link to all that has come before. At the same time that Petrarch has been calling into doubt the binding force of language in an age threatened with dissolution, he nonetheless chooses to end his work by reinforcing its connections with the ancient litanies, finding permanence in their enduring power to hold mankind in a state of hopeful expectation, if not literally to save them.

TABLE 2. Selected Chronology

Poem	Years since 1327	Petrarch's age	Year	Chronology
30	7	30	1334	Has read Augustine's *Confessiones*; dedicates himself to transfer of papacy back to Rome; writes poem 28
50	10	33	1337	First stay in Vaucluse; first trip to Rome; birth of illegitimate son, Giovanni, mother unknown; visits shrine of Mary Magdalene
62	11	34	1338	Begins *De viris illustribus*, *Africa*, and *Triumphs*
79	14	37	1341	Crowned poet laureate; First Form of *Canzoniere*; death of close friend Giacomo Colonna, predicted in *Famiares* V, 7
101	14	37	1341	——
118	16	39	1343	Birth of illegitimate daughter, Francesca, mother unknown; brother Gherardo joins monastery; Petrarch begins Penitential Psalms
122	17	40	1344	Begins *Rerum memorandum libri*, a treatise on the cardinal virtues
145	15-20	38-43	1342–1347	Begins study of Greek; begins *Secretum*, *De vita solitaria*; aligns himself with Visconti at Parma; writes "Italia mia" (poem 128) in 1344 or early 1345
212	20	43	1347	*De otio religioso*, a compendium of exempla of religious dedication; aligns himself with Cola di Rienzo; detaches himself from the Colonnas; leaves Avignon
221	20	43	1347	Black Death; Cola di Rienzo falls, Colonnas return to Rome
266	18	41	1345	Discovers letters of Cicero; second stay in Vaucluse
271	21	44	1348	Plague; death of Laura and Giovanni Colonna (Petrarch in Parma at the time); receives archdeaconship of Parma

Table 2. (*Continued*)

Poem	Years since 1327	Petrarch's age	Year	Chronology
278	24	47	1351	Has met Boccaccio, spends time with him at Padua; recommits himself to reforming the Church; last stay in Vaucluse; finds renewed hope in Emperor Charles IV
364	31	54	1358	Has left Vaucluse far behind; completes Third Form of *Canzoniere*; writes *Itinerarium syriacum*, an imaginary journey to the Holy Land

THE Canzoniere

1

Voi ch' ascoltate in rime sparse il suono
di quei sospiri ond' io nudriva 'l core
in sul mio primo giovenile errore,
quand' era in parte altr' uom da quel ch' i' sono,

del vario stile in ch' io piango et ragiono
fra le vane speranze e 'l van dolore,
ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,
spero trovar pietà, non che perdono.

Ma ben veggio or sì come al popol tutto
favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente
di me medesmo meco mi vergogno;

et del mio vaneggiar vergogna è 'l frutto,
e 'l pentersi, e 'l conoscer chiaramente
che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.

2

Per fare una leggiadra sua vendetta
et punire in un dì ben mille offese,
celatamente Amor l'arco riprese,
come uom ch' a nocer luogo e tempo aspetta.

Era la mia virtute al cor ristretta
per far ivi et negli occhi sue difese
quando 'l colpo mortal là giù discese
ove solea spuntarsi ogni saetta;

però, turbata nel primiero assalto
non ebbe tanto né vigor né spazio
che potesse al bisogno prender l'arme,

o vero al poggio faticoso et alto
ritrarmi accortamente da lo strazio
del quale oggi vorrebbe, et non po, aitarme.

1

O you who hear within these scattered verses
the sound of sighs with which I fed my heart
in my first errant youthful days when I
in part was not the man I am today;

for all the ways in which I weep and speak
between vain hopes, between vain suffering,
in anyone who knows love through its trials,
in them, may I find pity and forgiveness.

But now I see how I've become the talk
so long a time of people all around
(it often makes me feel so full of shame),

and from my vanities there comes shame's fruit,
and my repentance, and the clear awareness
that worldly joy is just a fleeting dream.

2

Determined to take up graceful revenge
and punish in one day a thousand wrongs,
secretly Love took up his bow again
and chose the proper time and place to strike.

My strength was concentrated in my heart,
and there and in my eyes raised its defense
when down upon it struck the mortal blow
where every other arrow had been blunted;

and so, bewildered by this first assault,
it did not have the vigor or the chance
to take up arms when it was time to fight,

or even to lead me cleverly back up
the high, hard mountain saving me from slaughter,
from which he'd like to now, but cannot help.

3

Era il giorno ch' al sol si scoloraro
per la pietà del suo fattore i rai
quando i' fui preso, et non me ne guardai,
ché i be' vostr' occhi, Donna, mi legaro.

Tempo non mi parea da far riparo
contr' a' colpi d'Amor; però m'andai
secur, senza sospetto, onde i miei guai
nel commune dolor s'incominciaro.

Trovommi Amor del tutto disarmato,
et aperta la via per gli occhi al core
che di lagrime son fatti uscio et varco.

Però al mio parer non li fu onore
ferir me de saetta in quello stato,
a voi armata non mostrar pur l'arco.

4

Que' ch' infinita providenzia et arte
mostrò nel suo mirabil magistero,
che criò questo et quell'altro emispero,
et mansueto più Giove che Marte,

vegnendo in terra a 'lluminar le carte
ch' avean molt'anni già celato il vero,
tolse Giovanni da la rete et Piero
et nel regno del ciel fece lor parte;

di sé nascendo a Roma non fe' grazia,
a Giudea sì, tanto sovr' ogni stato
umiltate esaltar sempre gli piacque.

Ed or di picciol borgo un sol n'à dato,
tal che natura o 'l luogo si ringrazia
onde sì bella donna al mondo nacque.

3

It was the day the sun's ray had turned pale
with pity for the suffering of his Maker
when I was caught (and I put up no fight),
my lady, for your lovely eyes had bound me.

It seemed no time to be on guard against
Love's blows; therefore, I went my way
secure and fearless—so, all my misfortunes
began in midst of universal woe.

Love found me all disarmed and saw the way
was clear to reach my heart down through the eyes,
which have become the halls and doors of tears.

It seems to me it did him little honor
to wound me with his arrow in my state
and to you, armed, not show his bow at all.

4

That one who showed His endless providence
and art by means of marvelous workmanship,
who made this and that other hemisphere
and who created Jove more mild than Mars,

who coming down to earth illuminating
those pages that had hid the truth so long,
took Peter from the nets and John as well,
making of them a part of Heaven's realm,

who with His birth did not choose Rome to grace,
but chose Judea, for above all else
it pleased Him to exalt humility.

And now from a small town He's given us
a sun such that we thank Nature and place
that brought into the world this lovely lady.

5

Quando io movo i sospiri a chiamar voi
e 'l nome che nel cor mi scrisse Amore,
LAU-dando s'incomincia udir di fore
il suon de' primi dolci accenti suoi; 4

vostro stato RE-al che 'ncontro poi
raddoppia a l'alta impresa il mio valore;
ma "TA-ci," grida il fin, "ché farle onore
è d'altri omeri soma che da' tuoi." 8

Così LAU-dare et RE-verire insegna
la voce stessa, pur ch' altri vi chiami,
o d'ogni reverenza et d'onor degna; 11

se non che forse Apollo si disdegna
ch'a parlar de' suoi sempre verdi rami
lingua mor-TA-l presuntuosa vegna. 14

6

Sì traviato è 'l folle mi' desio
a seguitar costei che 'n fuga è volta
et de' lacci d'Amor leggiera et sciolta
vola dinanzi al lento correr mio, 4

che quanto richiamando più l'envio
per la secura strada men m'ascolta,
né mi vale spronarlo o dargli volta
ch' Amor per sua natura il fa restio; 8

et poi che 'l fren per forza a sé raccoglie,
i' mi rimango in signoria di lui,
che mal mio grado a morte mi trasporta; 11

sol per venir al lauro onde si coglie
acerbo frutto, che le piaghe altrui
gustando affligge più che non conforta. 14

5

When I summon my sighs to call for you,
with that name Love inscribed upon my heart,
in LAUdable the sound at the beginning
of the sweet accents of that word comes forth.

Your REgal state which I encounter next
doubles my strength for the high enterprise,
but "TAcitly" the end cries, "for her honor
needs better shoulders for support than yours."

And so, to LAUd and to REvere the word
itself instructs whenever someone calls you,
O lady worthy of all praise and honor,

unless, perhaps, Apollo be offended
that morTAl tongue be so presumptuous
to speak of his eternally green boughs.

6

So far astray is my insane desire
to chase this lady who has turned in flight,
and light and liberated of Love's snares,
flies off ahead of my slow run for her,

that when, calling him back, the more I send him
by the safe path the less he pays me heed;
nor does it help to spur him or to turn him,
for Love by its own nature makes him restive;

and when by force he takes the reins himself,
I am left there in harness of his lordship
as he against my will rides me to death,

only to reach the laurel where is gathered
the bitter fruit, once tasted, that afflicts
rather than comforts someone else's wounds.

7

La gola e 'l sonno et l'oziose piume
ànno del mondo ogni vertù sbandita,
ond' è dal corso suo quasi smarrita
nostra natura vinta dal costume; 4

et è sì spento ogni benigno lume
del ciel per cui s'informa umana vita,
che per cosa mirabile s'addita
chi vol far d'Elicona nascer fiume. 8

Qual vaghezza di lauro, qual di mirto?
"Povera et nuda vai, Filosofia,"
dice la turba al vil guadagno intesa. 11

Pochi compagni avrai per l'altra via:
tanto ti prego più, gentile spirto,
non lassar la magnanima tua impresa. 14

8

A pie' de' colli ove la bella vesta
prese de le terrene membra pria
la donna che colui ch' a te ne 'nvia
spesso dal sonno lagrimando desta, 4

libere in pace passavam per questa
vita mortal, ch' ogni animal desia,
senza sospetto di trovar fra via
cosa ch' al nostro andar fosse molesta. 8

Ma del misero stato ove noi semo
condotte da la vita altra serena
un sol conforto, et de la morte, avemo: 11

che vendetta è di lui ch' a ciò ne mena,
lo qual in forza altrui presso a l'estremo
riman legato con maggior catena. 14

7

Gluttony, sleep, pillows of idleness,
have banished every virtue from the world
whereby our nature conquered by its habits
has almost lost its way along the road;

so spent is every good light from the heavens
which should inform our human life that he
is pointed out as some remarkable thing
who would make water flow from Helicon.

Who wishes for the laurel, or for myrtle!
"In poverty and naked goes Philosphy,"
the masses bent on making money say.

You will have few companions on that road,
so all the more I beg you, noble spirit,
do not abandon your magnanimous task.

8

Beneath those hills (where she had first adorned
those worldly parts of hers in lovely clothes,
that lady, she who often wakens weeping
the one who now is sending us to you)

we used to make our way through mortal life
in peace and freedom all creatures desire,
without the fear of finding on our course
something that might be harmful to our going.

But for the wretched state to which we've been
brought from the other life that was serene,
and for our death, we have one consolation:

revenge is taken on the one who caught us,
for he is caught by power of another
and, near his end, is bound by greater chains.

9

Quando 'l pianeta che distingue l'ore
ad albergar col Tauro si ritorna,
cade vertù da l'infiammate corna
che veste il mondo di novel colore, 4

Et non pur quel che s'apre a noi di fore,
le rive e i colli, di fioretti adorna,
ma dentro, dove giamai non s'aggiorna,
gravido fa di sé il terrestro umore; 8

onde tal frutto et simile si colga.
Così costei, ch' è tra le donne un sole,
in me movendo de' begli occhi i rai 11

cria d'amor penseri atti et parole;
ma come ch' ella gli governi o volga,
primavera per me pur non è mai. 14

10

Gloriosa Columna in cui s'appoggia
nostra speranza e 'l gran nome latino,
ch' ancor non torse del vero camino
l'ira di Giove per ventosa pioggia, 4

qui non palazzi, non teatro o loggia;
ma 'n lor vece un abete, un faggio, un pino—
tra l'erba verde e 'l bel monte vicino
onde si scende poetando et poggia— 8

levan di terra al ciel nostr' intelletto;
e 'l rosigniuol che dolcemente all'ombra
tutte le notti si lamenta et piagne, 11

d'amorosi penseri il cor ne 'ngombra.
Ma tanto ben sol tronchi et fai imperfetto
tu che da noi, Signor mio, ti scompagne. 14

9

The time is when the planet that marks hours
returns once more to make its home with Taurus,
whose flaming horns now pour down with their power
and decorate the world with fresh-made color.

Not only that which stretches out before us,
the banks and hills, does he adorn with flowers,
but hidden things that never see the dawn
does he make pregnant with his earthly moisture,

that it may give us this fruit and the like.
So she, who is a sun among all ladies,
moving the rays of her fair eyes, in me
gives rise to thoughts and acts and words of love—
no matter, though, how she controls or turns them,
springtime for me will never come about.

10

Glorious column upon whom there rests
our hope and great renown of Latium,
whom even the wrath of Jove with buffeting rain
has not yet turned aside from the true path:

there are no palaces, theaters, loggias here;
instead a fir, a beech, a pine tree stand—
between green grass and mountainside nearby,
where we in poetry descend and climb—

to lift our intellects from earth to heaven;
there is a nightingale that in the shadows
sweetly lamenting weeps throughout the night

and burdens every heart with thoughts of love.
From goodness you alone cut short perfection,
keeping yourself far from us here, my lord.

11

Lassare il velo per sole o per ombra,
Donna, non vi vid' io
poi che in me conosceste il gran desio
ch' ogni altra voglia d'entr' al cor mi sgombra.

Mentr' io portava i be' pensier celati
ch' ànno la mente desiando morta,
vidivi di pietate ornare il volto;
ma poi ch' Amor di me vi fece accorta,
fuor i biondi capelli allor velati
et l'amoroso sguardo in sé raccolto.
Quel ch' i' più desiava in voi m'è tolto,
sì mi governa il velo
che per mia morte et al caldo et al gielo
de' be' vostr' occhi il dolce lume adombra.

12

Se la mia vita da l'aspro tormento
si può tanto schermire, et dagli affanni,
ch' i' veggia per vertù degli ultimi anni,
Donna, de' be' vostr' occhi il lume spento,

e i cape' d'oro fin farsi d'argento,
et lassar le ghirlande e i verdi panni,
e 'l viso scolorir che ne' miei danni
al lamentar mi fa pauroso et lento,

pur mi darà tanta baldanza Amore
ch' i' vi discovrirò de' miei martiri
qua' sono stati gli anni, e i giorni, et l'ore;

et se 'l tempo è contrario ai be' desiri,
non fia ch' almen non giunga al mio dolore
alcun soccorso di tardi sospiri.

11

In sun or shade I've never seen you, lady,
remove that veil of yours
since you discovered my so great desire
that every other wish fades in my heart.

While I carried my loving thoughts in secret,
the ones that kill my heart with their desire,
I saw your face adorned with pity then;
but when Love made you conscious of my feelings,
your blond hair took the veil immediately,
your loving gaze withdrew into itself.
What I most longed for in you I have lost;
it is the veil that rules me,
which to my death, in warmth or cooler weather,
covers the sweet light of your lovely eyes.

12

If my life can resist the bitter anguish
and all its struggles long enough for me
to see the brilliance of your lovely eyes,
lady, dimmed by the force of your last years,

and your fine golden hair changing to silver,
and see you give up garlands and green clothes,
and your face pale that in all my misfortunes
now makes me slow and timid to lament,

then Love at least will make me bold enough
so that I may disclose to you my suffering,
the years, the days, the hours, what they were like;

and should time work against my sweet desires,
at least it will not stop my grief receiving
some comfort brought by late-arriving sighs.

13

Quando fra l'altre donne ad ora ad ora
Amor vien nel bel viso di costei,
quanto ciascuna è men bella di lei
tanto cresce 'l desio che m'innamora.

I' benedico il loco e 'l tempo et l'ora
che sì alto miraron gli occhi mei,
et dico: "Anima, assai ringraziar dei
che fosti a tanto onor degnata allora.

"Da lei ti ven l'amoroso pensero
che mentre 'l segui al sommo ben t'invia,
poco prezzando quel ch' ogni uom desia;

"da lei vien l'animosa leggiadria
ch' al ciel ti scorge per destro sentero,
sì ch' i' vo già de la speranza altero."

14

Occhi miei lassi, mentre ch' io vi giro
nel bel viso di quella che v'à morti,
pregovi siate accorti,
che già vi sfida Amore, ond' io sospiro.

Morte po chiuder sola a' miei penseri
l'amoroso camin che gli conduce
al dolce porto de la lor salute,
ma puossi a voi celar la vostra luce
per meno oggetto, perché meno interi
siete formati et di minor virtute.
Però dolenti, anzi che sian venute
l'ore del pianto che son già vicine,
prendete or a la fine
breve conforto a sì lungo martiro.

13

When Love within her lovely face appears
now and again among the other ladies,
as much as each is less lovely than she,
the more the wish I love within me grows.

I bless the place, the time and hour of the day
that my eyes aimed their sights at such a height
and say: "My soul, you must be very grateful
that you were found worthy of such great honor.

"From her to you comes loving thought that leads,
as long as you pursue, to highest good,
esteeming little what all men desire:

"there comes from her all joyous honesty
that leads you by the straight path up to Heaven—
already I fly high upon my hope."

14

My weary eyes, as I turn you to look
upon the lovely face that killed your sight,
I beg you to be careful,
for Love defies you now, and so I sigh.

Death is the only one that can cut off
my thoughts along the loving path that guides
these thoughts to the sweet port of their own healing,
but your light can be hidden from your sight
by something less objective, since you are
of less perfection formed and with less power.
And so, mournful, before the tearful hours
(already close to you) are with you then,
now that the end is near,
take some brief solace for long martyrdom.

15

Io mi rivolgo indietro a ciascun passo
col corpo stanco ch' a gran pena porto,
et prendo allor del vostr' aere conforto
che 'l fa gir oltra, dicendo: "Oimè, lasso."

Poi ripensando al dolce ben ch'io lasso,
al camin lungo, et al mio viver corto,
fermo le piante sbigottito et smorto,
et gli occhi in terra lagrimando abbasso.

Talor m'assale in mezzo a' tristi pianti
un dubbio: come posson queste membra
da lo spirito lor viver lontane?

Ma rispondemi Amor: "Non ti rimembra
che questo è privilegio degli amanti,
sciolti da tutte qualitati umane?"

16

Movesi il vecchierel canuto et bianco
del dolce loco ov' à sua età fornita
et da la famigliuola sbigottita
che vede il caro padre venir manco;

indi traendo poi l'antico fianco
per l'estreme giornate di sua vita,
quanto più po col buon voler s'aita,
rotto dagli anni, et dal camino stanco;

et viene a Roma, seguendo 'l desio,
per mirar la sembianza di colui
ch' ancor lassù nel ciel vedere spera.

Così, lasso, talor vo cercand' io,
Donna, quanto è possibile in altrui
la disiata vostra forma vera.

15

With every step I take my weary body,
which I bear with me in great pain, turns back,
then from the air around you I take strength
to move it onward and say:.“Woe, poor me!”

Then thinking of the sweet good that I leave,
of my long journey and of my brief life,
I stop short in bewilderment, and pale,
I look down at the ground, my eyes in tears.

Sometimes amid my sad laments a doubt
assails me: how can all these parts of me
survive so far away from their own soul?

But then Love answers me: “Don’t you remember
it is a privilege granted to all lovers,
to be free of all human qualities.”

16

The old man takes his leave, white-haired and pale,
of the sweet place where he filled out his age
and leaves his little family, bewildered
to see its own dear father disappear;

from there, dragging along his ancient limbs
throughout the very last days of his life,
helping himself with good will all he can,
broken by years, and wearied by the road,

he comes to Rome, pursuing his desire,
to look upon the likeness of the One
that he still hopes to see up there in Heaven.

Just so, alas, sometimes I go, my lady,
searching, as much as possible, in others
for your true, your desirable form.

17

Piovonmi amare lagrime dal viso
con un vento angoscioso di sospiri,
quando in voi adiven che gli occhi giri
per cui sola dal mondo i' son diviso. 4

Vero è che 'l dolce mansueto riso
pur acqueta gli ardenti miei desiri
et mi sottragge al foco de' martiri
mentr' io son a mirarvi intento et fiso; 8

ma gli spiriti miei s'agghiaccian poi
ch' i' veggio al departir gli atti soavi
torcer da me le mie fatali stelle. 11

Largata al fin co l'amorose chiavi
l'anima esce del cor per seguir voi,
et con molto pensiero indi si svelle. 14

18

Quand' io son tutto volto in quella parte
ove 'l bel viso di Madonna luce,
et m'è rimasa nel pensier la luce
che m'arde et strugge dentro a parte a parte, 4

i' che temo del cor che mi si parte,
et veggio presso il fin de la mia luce,
vommene in guisa d'orbo, senza luce,
che non sa ove si vada et pur si parte. 8

Così davanti a' colpi de la morte
fuggo, ma non sì ratto che 'l desio
meco non venga, come venir sòle; 11

tacito vo, ché le parole morte
farian pianger la gente, et i' desio
che le lagrime mie si spargan sole. 14

17

A bitter rain of tears pours down my face
blowing with a wind of anguished sighs
should my eyes turn to look at you alone
for whom I am divided from mankind.

There is no doubt your sweet and soothing smile
does calm the ardor of all my desires
and rescues me from burning martyrdom
as long as I keep my gaze fixed in you;

but then my spirits suddenly turn cold
when I see, as you leave, those fated stars
turning their gentle motion from my sight.

Let loose, at last, by those two amorous keys,
the soul deserts the heart to follow you,
and deep in thought it tears itself away.

18

When all of me is drawn in the direction
of that place where my lady's sweet face shines,
and in my thought there shines the lingering light,
that burns and melts me inside bit by bit,

I, fearing for my heart that breaks to pieces,
and seeing my day's light is soon to end,
move forward like a blind man, without light,
who knows not where he goes but goes the same.

And so it is before the blows of death
I flee, but not so quickly that desire
does not come with me, as it always does;

I go in silence, for my deadly words
would make all others weep, and I desire
that all my tears be shed in solitude.

19

Son animali al mondo de sì altera
vista che 'ncontra 'l sol pur si difende;
altri, però che 'l gran lume gli offende,
non escon fuor se non verso la sera; 4

et altri, col desio folle che spera
gioir forse nel foco, perché splende,
provan l'altra vertù, quella che' ncende,
lasso, e 'l mio loco è 'n questa ultima schera. 8

Ch' i' non son forte ad aspettar la luce
di questa donna, et non so fare schermi
di luoghi tenebrosi o d'ore tarde; 11

però con gli occhi lagrimosi e 'nfermi
mio destino a vederla mi conduce,
et so ben ch' i' vo dietro a quel che m'arde. 14

20

Vergognando talor ch' ancor si taccia,
Donna, per me vostra bellezza in rima,
ricorro al tempo ch' i' vi vidi prima,
tal che null' altra fia mai che mi piaccia; 4

ma trovo peso non da le mie braccia,
né ovra da polir colla mia lima;
però l'ingegno che sua forza estima
ne l'operazion tutto s'agghiaccia. 8

Più volte già per dir le labbra apersi,
poi rimase la voce in mezzo 'l petto:
ma qual son poria mai salir tant'alto? 11

Più volte incominciai di scriver versi,
ma la penna et la mano et l'intelletto
rimaser vinti nel primier assalto. 14

19

Animals exist on earth of such courageous
sight that they dare to face even the sun;
others, because they're harmed by such great light,
do not come out until the sun is setting;

and others in their mad desire hoping
for joy in fire, perhaps because it glows,
learn of its other power, that of burning.
Alas, my place is with this latter race!

I am not strong enough to face the light
of this lady; I cannot shield myself
in shadowed places or in evening hours;

and so with eyes of tears and weariness
my destiny directs me to behold her,
and well I know I follow what will burn me.

20

Ashamed at times that I still have not praised
your beauty, lady, in my poetry,
I think about the first time I beheld you,
the one made for my love as no one was;

but I find it a weight not for my arms,
a work not to be polished by my file,
and so my talent, judging its own strength,
in its attempt completely turns to ice.

Now more than once my lips have moved to speak,
but then my voice would get caught in my chest—
no matter, for what sound could soar so high!

Now more than once I started writing verse
but then the pen, the hand, the intellect
were conquered at the opening of the battle.

21

Mille fiate, o dolce mia guerrera,
per aver co' begli occhi vostri pace
v'aggio proferto il cor, m' a voi non piace
mirar sì basso colla mente altera; 4

et se di lui fors' altra donna spera,
vive in speranza debile et fallace;
mio, perché sdegno ciò ch'a voi dispiace,
esser non può giamai così com' era. 8

Or s' io lo scaccio, et e' non trova in voi
ne l'esilio infelice alcun soccorso,
né sa star sol, né gire ov' altri il chiama, 11

poria smarrire il suo natural corso;
che grave colpa fia d'ambeduo noi,
et tanto più de voi quanto più v'ama. 14

22

A qualunque animale alberga in terra,
se non se alquanti ch' ànno in odio il sole,
tempo da travagliare è quanto è 'l giorno;
ma poi che 'l ciel accende le sue stelle
qual torna a casa et qual s'annida in selva
per aver posa almeno infin a l'alba. 6

Et io, da che comincia la bella alba
a scuoter l'ombra intorno de la terra,
svegliando gli animali in ogni selva,
non ò mai triegua di sospir col sole;
poi quand' io veggio fiammeggiar le stelle
vo lagrimando et disiando il giorno. 12

Quando la sera scaccia il chiaro giorno,
et le tenebre nostre altrui fanno alba,
miro pensoso le crudeli stelle
che m'ànno fatto di sensibil terra,

21

A thousand times, O my sweet warrior,
to make peace with those lovely eyes of yours
I offered you my heart, but you refuse
to gaze so low with such a lofty mind;

and if, some other lady hopes, perhaps,
for it, she lives in weak, fallacious hope;
mine (for I spurn what does not give you pleasure),
can never be as it was once before.

Now if I banish it, and it cannot
find help from you in its unhappy exile,
or live alone, or answer other callings,

it could get lost along its natural road;
then grave guilt would belong to both of us,
and more to you, since it loves you the more.

22

For any animal that lives on earth,
except for those few made to hate the sun,
the time to toil is while it still is day;
but then when heaven lights up all its stars
some go back home while some nest in the wood
to find their rest at least until the dawn.

And I, from the first signs of lovely dawn
that shakes the shadows from around the earth
awakening the beasts in every wood,
can never cease to sigh while there is sun;
then when I see the flaring of the stars
I start to weep and long for the new day.

When night drives out the clarity of day
and our own dark is cause of others' dawn,
I gaze all full of care at the cruel stars
that once created me of sentient earth,

et maledico il dì ch' i' vidi 'l sole
che mi fa in vista un uom nudrito in selva.

Non credo che pascesse mai per selva
sì aspra fera, o di notte o di giorno,
come costei ch' i' piango a l'ombra e al sole;
et non mi stanca primo sonno od alba,
ché ben ch' i' sia mortal corpo di terra
lo mio fermo desir vien da le stelle.

Prima ch' i' torni a voi, lucenti stelle,
o tomi giù ne l'amorosa selva,
lassando il corpo che fia trita terra,
vedess' io in lei pietà, che 'n un sol giorno
può ristorar molt' anni, e 'nanzi l'alba
puommi aricchir dal tramontar del sole.

Con lei foss' io da che si parte il sole,
et non ci vedess' altri che le stelle,
sol una notte et mai non fosse l'alba,
et non se transformasse in verde selva
per uscirmi di braccia, come il giorno
ch' Apollo la seguia qua giù per terra!

Ma io sarò sotterra in secca selva,
e 'l giorno andrà pien di minute stelle,
prima ch' a sì dolce alba arrivi il sole.

and I curse the first day I saw the sun
which makes me seem a man raised in the wood.

I think there never grazed in any wood
so cruel a beast, whether by night or day,
as she for whom I weep in shade and sun,
from which I am not stopped by sleep or dawn;
for though I am a body of this earth,
my firm desire comes down from the stars.

Before returning to you, shining stars,
or sinking back into the amorous wood
leaving my body turned to powdered earth,
might I see pity in her, for one day
can restore many years, and before dawn
enrich me from the setting of the sun!

Could I be with her at the fading sun
and seen by no one, only by the stars,
for just one night, to never see the dawn,
and she not be transformed into green wood
escaping from my arms as on the day
Apollo had pursued her here on earth!

But I'll be under earth in a dry wood
and day will be all full of tiny stars
before so sweet a dawn will see the sun.

23

Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade,
che nascer vide et ancor quasi in erba
la fera voglia che per mio mal crebbe,
perché cantando il duol si disacerba,
canterò com' io vissi in libertade
mentre Amor nel mio albergo a sdegno s'ebbe;
poi seguirò sì come a lui ne 'ncrebbe
troppo altamente e che di ciò m'avenne,
di ch' io son fatto a molta gente esempio;
ben che 'l mio duro scempio
sia scritto altrove, sì che mille penne
ne son già stanche, et quasi in ogni valle
rimbombi il suon de' miei gravi sospiri,
ch' acquistan fede a la penosa vita.
E se qui la memoria non m'aita
come suol fare, iscusilla i martiri
et un penser che solo angoscia dàlle,
tal ch' ad ogni altro fa voltar le spalle
e mi face obliar me stesso a forza,
ch' e' ten di me quel d'entro, et io la scorza.

I' dico che dal dì che 'l primo assalto
mi diede Amor, molt' anni eran passati,
sì ch' io cangiava il giovenil aspetto,
e d'intorno al mio cor pensier gelati
fatto avean quasi adamantino smalto
ch' allentar non lassava il duro affetto;
lagrima ancor non mi bagnava il petto
né rompea il sonno, et quel che in me non era
mi pareva un miracolo in altrui.
Lasso, che son? che fui?
La vita el fin, e 'l dì loda la sera;
ché sentendo il crudel di ch' io ragiono
infin allor percossa di suo strale
non essermi passato oltra la gonna,
prese in sua scorta una possente Donna
ver cui poco giamai mi valse o vale
ingegno o forza o dimandar perdono;

23

In the sweet season of my early years
which saw the birth and the still tender green
of the fierce passion which grew up against me,
since singing can unripen bitter pain,
I'll sing of how I lived in liberty
while Love had not been welcomed in my home;
and then I'll tell how this offended him
too deeply, and what happened to me then
that I became a lesson for the many,
even though my harsh undoing
has been recorded elsewhere, exhausting
a thousand pens by now, and every valley
is echoing with the sound of my grave sighs,
attesting to a painful way of life.
If memory is no help to me now,
as once it was, let pain be my excuse
and that thought which alone inflicts such anguish,
it makes me turn my back on any other
and forces me to lose all sense of self—
it owns what's in me, I merely the shell.

I tell you from the day that Love first thrust
his blow at me many a year had passed
and I was giving up my youthful looks;
around my heart the frozen thoughts had formed
a kind of adamantine toughness there,
which never let my hard decision out;
no tear until this time had bathed my breast
nor broke my sleep, and what was not in me
appeared miraculously so in others.
Oh, what am I? What was I?
The end lauds life, the night what day has brought;
because that savage one of whom I speak,
aware that until now his arrow's blow
had not pierced me beyond the clothes I wore,
took as his patroness a mighty lady
against whom wit or force or begging pardon
did serve me just as little then as now;

ei duo mi trasformaro in quel ch' i' sono,
facendomi d'uom vivo un lauro verde
che per fredda stagion foglia non perde.

Qual mi fec' io quando primier m'accorsi
de la trasfigurata mia persona,
e i capei vidi far di quella fronde
di che sperato avea già lor corona,
e i piedi in ch' io mi stetti et mossi et corsi,
com' ogni membro a l'anima risponde,
diventar due radici sovra l'onde
non di Peneo ma d'un più altero fiume,
e 'n duo rami mutarsi ambe le braccia!
Né meno ancor m'agghiaccia
l'esser coverto poi di bianche piume
allor che folminato et morto giacque
il mio sperar che tropp' alto montava;
che perch' io non sapea dove né quando
me 'l ritrovasse, solo, lagrimando,
là 've tolto mi fu, dì et notte andava
ricercando dallato e dentro a l'acque;
et giamai poi la mia lingua non tacque
mentre poteo del suo cader maligno,
ond' io presi col suon color d'un cigno.

Così lungo l'amate rive andai,
che volendo parlar, cantava sempre,
mercé chiamando con estrania voce;
né mai in sì dolci o in sì soavi tempre
risonar seppi gli amorosi guai
che 'l cor s'umiliasse aspro et feroce.
Qual fu a sentir? ché 'l ricordar mi coce.
Ma molto più di quel ch' è per inanzi
de la dolce et acerba mia nemica
è bisogno ch' io dica,
ben che sia tal ch' ogni parlare avanzi.
Questa che col mirar gli animi fura
m'aperse il petto el' cor prese con mano,
dicendo a me: "Di ciò non far parola."
Poi la rividi in altro abito sola,

both of them changed me into what I am:
from living man they turned me to green laurel
that does not lose its leaves in the cold season.

The way I felt when I became aware
of the transfiguration of my body
and saw my hair turning into those leaves
I once had hoped to make into my crown,
and both the feet I stood on, moved and ran
(as every limb responds to the soul's power)
changing into two roots above the waves
not of Peneus but a prouder river,
and both my arms transformed into two branches!
Nor do I feel less fear
all covered in white feathers later on
when, struck by lightning and by death, my hope,
presuming to ascend too high, had fallen;
for since I did not know just when or where
I would recover it, alone, in tears,
I would go searching night and day that place
where I had lost it, near and in the waters;
and never from then on was my tongue silent
while I could speak about that evil fall,
and with the swan's song I took on its color.

And so I went along the shores I loved,
and wanting to express myself, I sang
with a strange voice, constantly begging mercy;
but I could never make my amorous cries
resound in tones so sweet or soft enough
to bring her harsh, cruel heart to condescension.
What I felt then, if thinking back, still burns!
But much more than what I have told about
that sweet yet bitter enemy of mine
I feel I must reveal,
although she is beyond what words can say.
This one, who with a glance can steal a heart,
opened my breast and took my heart in hand,
saying to me: "Say not a word about this."
Then I saw her alone in other garb

tal ch' i' non la conobbi, o senso umano!
anzi le dissi 'l ver pien di paura;
ed ella ne l'usata sua figura
tosto tornando fecemi, oimè lasso!
d'un quasi vivo et sbigottito sasso.

Ella parlava sì turbata in vista
che tremar mi fea dentro a quella petra,
udendo: "I' non son forse chi tu credi."
E dicea meco: "Se costei mi spetra
nulla vita mi fia noiosa o trista;
a farmi lagrimar, signor mio, riedi."
Come non so, pur io mossi indi i piedi,
non altrui incolpando che me stesso,
mezzo tutto quel dì tra vivo et morto.
Ma perché 'l tempo è corto
la penna al buon voler non po gir presso,
onde più cose ne la mente scritte
vo trapassando, et sol d'alcune parlo
che meraviglia fanno a chi l'ascolta.
Morte mi s'era intorno al cor avolta
né tacendo potea di sua man trarlo
o dar soccorso a le vertuti afflitte;
le vive voci m'erano interditte,
ond' io gridai con carta et con incostro:
"Non son mio, no; s' io moro il danno è vostro."

Ben mi credea dinanzi agli occhi suoi
d'indegno far così di mercé degno,
et questa spene m'avea fatto ardito;
ma talora umiltà spegne disdegno
talor l'enfiamma, et ciò sepp' io da poi,
lunga stagion di tenebre vestito;
ch' a quei preghi il mio lume era sparito,
ed io non ritrovando intorno intorno
ombra di lei né pur de' suoi piedi orma,
come uom che tra via dorma,
gittaimi stanco sovra l'erba un giorno.
Ivi accusando il fugitivo raggio
a le lagrime triste allargai 'l freno

and did not know her, oh, who understands!
And full of fear I told her what the truth was,
and she resuming her accustomed form
quite quickly turned me into (oh, my grief)
a hardly living, baffled piece of stone.

She spoke with so much anger on her face,
it made me tremble in that stone to hear
"Perhaps I am not what you think I am."
I told myself: "If she were to unrock me,
no life could be as sad or hard as this;
come back and make me weep again, my lord."
I know not how, but I got out of there,
blaming no one but my self all that day
I walked away half living and half dead.
But since my time is short,
my pen cannot keep up with my good will,
so, many things recorded in my mind
I overlook and tell only of those
that stun the mind of anyone who listens.
Death had now wrapped itself around my heart,
and silence could not take it from her hands,
or give assistance to my hurting powers.
To use my spoken voice had been denied me
and so I shouted out with pen and paper;
"I'm not mine, no! If I die, it's your fault."

I thought by doing this that I, unworthy,
would in her eyes be worthy of her mercy,
and in such hope I found boldness to try;
but sometimes meekness will put out disdain,
sometimes inflame it—this I found out later,
when for a long time I was wrapped in darkness;
for with my prayers my light had disappeared,
and I, who found nowhere, nowhere the slightest
trace of herself, not even of her feet,
just like the tired traveler,
collapsed weary upon the grass one day.
And there, accusing her fugitive ray,
to desperate tears of mine I gave free rein

et lasciaile cader come a lor parve;
né giamai neve sotto al sol disparve
com' io senti' me tutto venir meno
et farmi una fontana a piè d'un faggio;
gran tempo umido tenni quel viaggio.
Chi udì mai d'uom vero nascer fonte?
e parlo cose manifeste et conte.

L'alma ch' è sol da Dio fatta gentile—
che già d'altrui non po venir tal grazia—
simile al suo fattor stato ritene;
però di perdonar mai non è sazia
a chi col core et col sembiante umile
dopo quantunque offese a mercé vene.
Et se contra suo stile ella sostene
d'esser molto pregata, in lui si specchia,
et fal perché 'l peccar più si pavente;
ché non ben si ripente
de l'un mal chi de l'altro s'apparecchia.
Poi che Madonna da pietà commossa
degnò mirarme et ricognovve et vide
gir di pari la pena col peccato,
benigna mi redusse al primo stato.
Ma nulla à 'l mondo in ch' uom saggio si fide;
ch' ancor poi ripregando i nervi et l'ossa
mi volse in dura selce, et così scossa
voce rimasi de l'antiche some,
chiamando Morte et lei sola per nome.

Spirto doglioso errante mi rimembra
per spelunche deserte et pellegrine
piansi molt' anni il mio sfrenato ardire,
et ancor poi trovai di quel mal fine
et ritornai ne le terrene membra,
credo per più dolore ivi sentire.
I' segui' tanto avanti il mio desire
ch' un dì, cacciando sì com' io solea,
mi mossi, e quella fera bella et cruda
in una fonte ignuda
si stava, quando 'l sol più forte ardea.

and let them fall whenever they decided.
Snow never disappeard beneath the sun,
as I felt myself melt entirely
and turn to fountain where the beech tree grows.
For a long time I traveled the wet road.
Who ever heard of man turned into fountain?
And yet I speak of clear and well-known things.

The soul that God alone created noble—
for grace like this could come from no one else—
is similar to her own Creator's state;
therefore, she never stops forgiving one
who with humility in heart and face,
though he offended countless times, begs mercy.
And if, unlike herself, she is insistent
on one's insistent prayer, she mirrors Him
in order that the sinning be more feared;
for one about to sin
again does not repent well of his sin.
After my lady, who was moved by pity,
agreed to look at me, and knew and saw
that punishment was equal to the sin,
she graciously restored my old condition.
But wise men count on nothing in this world:
for when I begged again, my bones and nerves
she turned to hardest stone, and I was left
a voice shaken from its old, heavy self,
calling for Death and only her by name.

A mournful wandering spirit (I remember)
through unfamiliar and deserted caves,
I bewept for many years my unleashed boldness,
and still again from that ill I found freedom
and I assumed once more my living form
to suffer greater pain therein, I think.
And my desire I pursued so far
that one day, hunting as I often would,
I came upon that cruel and lovely beast
naked within a fountain
when the sun strikes the hottest time of day.

Io perché d'altra vista non m'appago
stetti a mirarla, ond' ella ebbe vergogna
et per farne vendetta o per celarse
l'acqua nel viso co le man mi sparse.
Vero dirò; forse e' parrà menzogna:
ch' i' senti' trarmi de la propria imago
et in un cervo solitario et vago
di selva in selva ratto mi trasformo,
et ancor de' miei can fuggo lo stormo.

Canzon, i' non fu' mai quel nuvol d'oro
che poi discese in preziosa pioggia
sì che 'l foco di Giove in parte spense;
ma fui ben fiamma ch' un bel guardo accense,
et fui l'uccel che più per l'aere poggia
alzando lei che ne' miei detti onoro;
né per nova figura il primo alloro
seppi lassar, ché pur la sua dolce ombra
ogni men bel piacer del cor mi sgombra.

I, since no other sight can please me more,
stood gazing at her, but she felt ashamed
and to revenge herself or else to hide
she splashed some water up into my face.
I'll tell the truth, though it may seem a lie!
I felt myself ripped from my very image
and quickly turned into a solitary,
wandering deer that moves from wood to wood,
and still I flee the rage of my own hounds.

Canzone, never was I that golden cloud
that once descended in a precious rain
so as to quench in part Jove's burning flame;
but surely I was flame lit by Love's glance,
I was the bird that rises highest through the air
raising the one whom in my words I honor;
and no strange shape could ever make me leave
the first laurel, for still its lovely shade
clears every lesser pleasure from my heart.

24

Se l'onorata fronde che prescrive
l'ira del ciel quando 'l gran Giove tona
non m'avesse disdetta la corona
che suole ornar chi poetando scrive,

i' era amico a queste vostre dive
le qua' vilmente il secolo abandona;
ma quella ingiuria già lunge mi sprona
da l'inventrice de le prime olive,

ché non bolle la polver d'Etiopia
sotto 'l più ardente sol, com' io sfavillo
perdendo tanto amata cosa propia.

Cercate dunque fonte più tranquillo,
ché 'l mio d'ogni liquor sostene inopia
salvo di quel che lagrimando stillo.

25

Amor piangeva et io con lui tal volta,
dal qual miei passi non fur mai lontani,
mirando per gli effetti acerbi et strani
l'anima vostra de' suoi nodi sciolta;

or ch' al dritto camin l'à Dio rivolta,
col cor levando al cielo ambe le mani
ringrazio lui che' giusti preghi umani
benignamente sua mercede ascolta.

Et se tornando a l'amorosa vita
per farvi al bel desio volger le spalle
trovaste per la via fossati o poggi,

fu per mostrar quanto è spinoso calle
et quanto alpestra et dura la salita
onde al vero valor conven ch' uom poggi.

24

If the illustrious branch that can control
the wrath of heaven when great Jove thunders down
had not refused to make for me the crown
adorning those composing poetry,

those goddesses of yours would be my friends,
the ones abandoned vilely by the world;
but that offense forces me far away
from the inventress of the olive tree,

for Ethiopia's sands do not burn more
beneath the hottest sun than I am burning
from losing something dear that was my own.

Go then and look for a more peaceful fountain,
for mine suffers a dearth of any liquid
except for that which weeping I let run.

25

Love at times would weep, and I, with him
from whom I never kept too far a distance,
would weep to see the strong and strange effects
that have released your soul tied in his knots;

now that God has returned it to the right path
with heart raised to the heavens and both hands,
I give my thanks to Him who in His mercy
so kindly understands just prayers of men.

And if, returning to the life of love,
to make you turn your back on sweet desire
you found some hills or ditches on your way,

it was to show how thorny is the path
and just how mountainous and hard the climb
by which a man must rise to reach true worth.

26

Più di me lieta non si vede a terra
nave da l'onde combattuta et vinta,
quando la gente di pietà depinta
su per la riva a ringraziar s'atterra; 4

né lieto più del carcer si diserra
chi 'ntorno al collo ebbe la corda avvinta,
di me veggendo quella spada scinta
che fece al segnor mio sì lunga guerra. 8

Et tutti voi ch' Amor laudate in rima,
al buon testor degli amorosi detti
rendete onor ch' era smarrito in prima; 11

ché più gloria è nel regno degli eletti
d'un spirito converso, et più s'estima,
che di novantanove altri perfetti. 14

27

Il successor di Carlo, che la chioma
co la corona del suo antiquo adorna,
prese à già l'arme per fiaccar le corna
a Babilonia et chi da lei si noma; 4

e 'l vicario de Cristo colla soma
de le chiavi et del manto al nido torna,
sì che s' altro accidente nol distorna
vedrà Bologna et poi la nobil Roma. 8

La mansueta vostra et gentil agna
abatte i fieri lupi, et così vada
chiunque amor legitimo scompagna; 11

consolate lei dunque, ch' ancor bada,
et Roma che del suo sposo si lagna,
et per Jhesù cingete omai la spada. 14

26

Happier than I there never came to land
a ship battled and defeated by the waves
when all its crew piteously painted pale
on shore fall to their knees giving their thanks;

nor happier that man set free from jail
who had just felt the cord twist round his neck,
than I to see that sword back in its sheath
that had waged war so long against my lord.

And all of you who praise Love in your verse,
to that fine weaver of love's poetry
give honor, honor the one who strayed before;

more glory shines in God's realm of elect
for one converted soul, and more respect,
than for ninety and nine perfected ones.

27

The successor of Charles who with the crown
of his ancestor now adorns his hair,
already takes up arms to break the horns
of Babylon and those who bear her name;

and the vicar of Christ who bears the burden
of keys and cloak returns now to the nest;
if accident of sorts not turn him back,
he'll see Bologna, then the noble Rome.

Your lamb of humbleness and grace destroys
the savage wolves—and so should suffer all
who separate a sanctified affair;

console her then, the one who still is waiting,
and Rome who is lamenting for her bridegroom,
and raise your sword now in the name of Jesus.

28

O aspettata in Ciel beata et bella
anima che di nostra umanitade
vestita vai (non, come l'altre, carca):
perché ti sian men dure omai le strade
(a Dio diletta, obediente ancella)
onde al suo regno di qua giù si varca,
ecco novellamente a la tua barca,
ch' al cieco mondo à già volte le spalle
per gir al miglior porto,
d'un vento occidental dolce conforto;
lo qual per mezzo questa oscura valle
ove piangiamo il nostro et l'altrui torto
la condurrà de' lacci antichi sciolta
per drittissimo calle
al verace oriente ov' ella è volta.

Forse i devoti et gli amorosi preghi
et le lagrime sante de' mortali
son giunte innanzi a la pietà superna;
et forse non fur mai tante né tali
che per merito lor punto si pieghi
fuor de suo corso la giustizia eterna.
Ma quel benigno Re che 'l ciel governa
al sacro loco ove fu posto in croce
gli occhi per grazia gira,
onde nel petto al novo Carlo spira
la vendetta ch' a noi tardata noce
sì che molt'anni Europa ne sospira;
così soccorre a la sua amata sposa
tal che sol de la voce
fa tremar Babilonia et star pensosa.

Chiunque alberga tra Garona e 'l monte
e 'ntra 'l Rodano e 'l Reno et l'onde salse
le 'nsegne cristianissime accompagna;
et a cui mai di vero pregio calse
dal Pireneo a l'ultimo orizonte
con Aragon lassarà vota Ispagna.
Inghilterra con l'isole che bagna
l'Occeano intra 'l Carro et le Colonne,

28

O beautiful and blessèd soul that Heaven
waits for, soul who in our humanity
is clothed, not burdened by it like the rest;
so that by now the road may be less painful
for you, God's chosen one, obedient servant,
by which down here one crosses to His kingdom,
behold just now to help your boat along,
which has already turned from the blind world
headed for a better port,
there blows a western wind with its sweet comfort,
a wind by means of which through this dark valley
in which we weep for ours and others' wrongs
it will be led, now free of ancient bonds,
along the straightest course
to the true Orient toward which it's turned.

Perhaps all those devout and loving prayers
and all the pious tears of mortal man
have reached the presence of His highest pity;
perhaps there weren't so many or so great
that by their merit they could swerve at all
eternal justice from its very course;
but rather that good King who rules the heavens
to the holy place where He was crucified
turns in His grace His eyes
and breathes into the breast of the new Charles
that vengeance whose delay has brought us harm
and made all Europe sigh for many years;
and doing so He helps His much loved bride,
that One whose voice alone
fills Babylon with fear and makes it tremble.

All those between the mountains and Garonne,
between the Rhône and Rhine and the salt waves,
accompanies the Christianest of standards,
and all who ever cared about true worth
from Pyrenees up to the last horizon
behind the Aragon will leave Spain empty.
England and all the islands that are bathed
by Ocean stretching from the Wain to Columns,

in fin là dove sona
dottrina del santissimo Elicona,
varie di lingue et d'arme et de le gonne
a l'alta impresa caritate sprona.
Deh, qual amor sì licito o sì degno,
qua' figli mai, qua' donne
furon materia a sì giusto disdegno?

Una parte del mondo è che si giace
mai sempre in ghiaccio et in gelate nevi,
tutta lontana dal camin del sole;
là sotto i giorni nubilosi et brevi,
nemica naturalmente di pace
nasce una gente a cui il morir non dole.
Questa se più devota che non sòle
col tedesco furor la spada cigne,
Turchi Arabi et Caldei,
con tutti quei che speran nelli Dei
di qua dal mar che fa l'onde sanguigne,
quanto sian da prezzar conoscer dèi:
popolo ignudo paventoso et lento,
che ferro mai non strigne
ma tutt' i colpi suoi commette al vento.

Dunque ora è 'l tempo da ritrare il collo
dal giogo antico, et da squarciare il velo
ch' è stato avolto intorno agli occhi nostri,
et che 'l nobile ingegno che dal cielo
per grazia tien de l'immortale Apollo
et l'eloquentia sua vertù qui mostri
or con la lingua, or co' laudati incostri.
Perché d'Orfeo leggendo et d'Anfione
se non ti meravigli,
assai men fia ch' Italia co' suoi figli
si desti al suon del tuo chiaro sermone
tanto che per Jhesù la lancia pigli:
che s' al ver mira questa antica madre,
in nulla sua tenzione
fur mai cagion sì belle o sì leggiadre.

Tu ch' ài per arricchir d'un bel tesauro
volte l'antiche et le moderne carte,
volando al ciel colla terrena soma,

as far as there is heard
the word of the most sacred Helicon,
all different in their language, arms, and customs,
charity spurs to this high undertaking.
Ah, what love however right or worthy,
what sons, what women ever
were subject of so just disdain as this?

There is a piece of this world that is resting
forever under ice and frozen snow,
so far from where the sun travels its course:
there, under cloudy days that last so briefly,
is born a people enemies by nature
to peace and to whom dying does not hurt.
Were these folk, more devout than in the past,
to take up sword in their Teutonic rage,
then Arabs, Turks, and Chaldeans
together with all those who hope in gods
on this side of the sea of bloody waves,
you'll see how little all of them are worth:
a people naked, slow, and cowardly,
who never seize the steel
but rather trust the wind to take their blows.

And so the time is now to pull our neck
from that old yoke and to destroy the veil,
the one that has been wrapped around our eyes;
and time your noble mind, bestowed on you
by grace of our immortal god Apollo,
display the power of your eloquence
both through your spoken words and your praised writings.
If reading of Amphion and of Orpheus
does not amaze you much,
far less you'll be when Italy and her sons
are wakened by the sound of your clear voice
and take their sword in hand for sake of Jesus;
for if this ancient mother looks on truth,
in none of her past battles
will she find cause so fair, so glorious.

You who, to grow rich with true treasure
have turned the ancient and the modern pages
soaring up to Heaven with your earthly weight,

sai da l'imperio del figliuol de Marte
al grande Augusto che di verde lauro
tre volte triunfando ornò la chioma
ne l'altrui ingiurie del suo sangue Roma
spesse fiate quanto fu cortese;
et or perché non fia
cortese no, ma conoscente et pia
a vendicar le dispietate offese
col figliuol glorioso di Maria?
Che dunque la nemica parte spera
ne l'umane difese,
se Cristo sta da la contraria schiera?

Pon mente al temerario ardir di Xerse,
che fece per calcare i nostri liti
di novi ponti oltraggio a la marina,
et vedrai ne la morte de' mariti
tutte vestite a brun le donne perse
et tinto in rosso il mar di Salamina.
Et non pur questa misera ruina
del popolo infelice d'oriente
vittoria t'empromette,
ma Maratona et le mortali strette
che difese il Leon con poca gente,
et altre mille ch' ài ascoltate et lette.
Per che inchinare a Dio molto convene
le ginocchia et la mente
che gli anni tuoi riserva a tanto bene.

Tu vedrai Italia et l'onorata riva,
canzon, ch' agli occhi miei cela et contende
non mar non poggio o fiume
ma solo Amor, che del suo altero lume
più m'invaghisce dove più m'incende,
né natura può star contra 'l costume.
Or movi, non smarrir l'altre compagne,
che non pur sotto bende
alberga Amor, per cui si ride et piagne.

you know—that from the reign of Mars' own son
to great Augustus who with the green laurel
three times triumphing did adorn his brow—
how often and how generous Rome was
with its own blood in the defense of others;
and now why should she be
not generous, but pious and most grateful
in vengeance of those merciless offenses
against the Virgin Mary's glorious son?
So then how can the enemy have hope
in any human defense
if Christ is part of the opposing ranks?

Consider the bold rashness of a Xerxes,
who with intentions to tread on our shores
had done the sea an outrage with strange bridges,
and you will see the many Persian women
all dressed in black because their husbands died,
and tainted red the sea of Salamis.
Not only does that miserable ruin
of those unhappy people of the East
vouchsafe your victory,
but also Marathon and the mortal straits
defended by the Lion with a few men
and a thousand others you have heard and read.
So then it is most fitting that you bend
your knees and heart to God
who has reserved your years for so much good.

You will see Italy and the honored shore,
my song, denied my eyes and hidden not
by sea or hill or stream,
but only Love who with his noble light
attracts me more where more he does enflame me,
and nature is not strong enough for habit.
Now go, don't separate from your companions,
for not only beneath a veil
does Love that gives us joy and tears abide.

29

Verdi panni sanguigni oscuri o persi
non vestì donna unquanco
né d'or capelli in bionda treccia attorse
sì bella come questa che mi spoglia
d'arbitrio et dal camin de libertade
seco mi tira sì ch' io non sostegno
alcun giogo men grave.

Et se pur s'arma talor a dolersi
l'anima a cui vien manco
consiglio ove 'l martir l'adduce in forse,
rappella lei da la sfrenata voglia
subita vista, ché del cor mi rade
ogni delira impresa et ogni sdegno
fa 'l veder lei soave.

Di quanto per amor giamai soffersi
et aggio a soffrir anco
fin che mi sani 'l cor colei che 'l morse
rubella di mercé che pur l'envoglia,
vendetta fia; sol che contra umiltade
orgoglio et ira il bel passo ond' io vegno
non chiuda et non inchiave.

Ma l'ora e 'l giorno ch' io le luci apersi
nel bel nero et nel bianco
che mi scacciar di là dove Amor corse
novella d'esta vita che m'addoglia
furon radice, et quella in cui l'etade
nostra si mira, la qual piombo o legno
vedendo è chi non pave.

Lagrima dunque che dagli occhi versi—
per quelle che nel manco
lato mi bagna chi primier s'accorse
quadrella—dal voler mio non mi svoglia,
ché 'n giusta parte la sentenza cade;
per lei sospira l'alma, et ella è degno
che le sue piaghe lave.

Da me son fatti i miei pensier diversi:
tal già qual io mi stanco

29

Green clothes, bright red or dark or purple ones
no lady ever wore
or hair of gold has twisted in blond braid
as beautiful as this one who deprives
me of my will, and from the path of freedom
draws me to her, so that I cannot bear
a yoke that's any lighter.

And if sometimes my soul takes arms complaining,
no longer having any
counsel, exposed to doubt through martyrdom,
from its unbridled will the very sight of her
will call it back, for from the heart she strips
all mad desire, and all of my disdain
the sight of her makes sweet.

All that I ever suffered in love's name
and all I still must suffer—
until the one who pierced my heart will cure it,
rebel of mercy who still makes it yearn—
shall be revenged, as long as pride and anger
against humility does not lock shut
my lovely way to reach her.

The hour and the day my eyes were opened
to lovely black and whiteness,
which drove me from the place Love ran to take,
were the first root of this, my life of pain,
as well as she in whom our century marvels;
and he is made of lead or wood who sees
this one and does not tremble.

No tear, therefore, that from my eyes is shed—
as a result of those
arrows which in my left side bloody that
which first felt them—turns me from my desire,
for on the right place the just sentence falls;
it's their fault my soul sighs, and it is just
for them to wash her wounds.

My thoughts are now like strangers in my mind:
one driven like me once

l'amata spada in se stessa contorse;
né quella prego che però mi scioglia,
ché men son dritte al ciel tutt' altre strade
et non s'aspira al glorioso regno
certo in più salda nave. 42

Benigne stelle che compagne fersi
al fortunato fianco
quando il bel parto giù nel mondo scorse!
ch' è stella in terra, et come in lauro foglia
conserva verde il pregio d'onestade,
ove non spira folgore né indegno
vento mai che l'aggrave. 49

So io ben ch' a voler chiuder in versi
suo' laudi fora stanco
chi più degna la mano a scriver porse;
qual cella è di memoria in cui s'accoglia
quanta vede vertù, quanta beltade
chi gli occhi mira d'ogni valor segno,
dolce del mio cor chiave? 56

Quanto il sol gira, Amor più caro pegno,
Donna, di voi non àve. 58

had plunged the loving sword into herself;
but I do not beg her to set me free,
for other roads to heaven are less straight,
and one cannot hope for the realm of glory
in any ship that's stronger.

O gracious stars, companions at the time
of that fortunate womb
when its fair fruit descended to the world!
A star on earth, and as the laurel leaf,
she keeps the green prize of her chastity,
and lightning never strikes it nor unworthy
wind ever makes it bend.

How well I know to want to capture all
her praise in verse would vanquish
whoever put the worthiest hand to writing;
what cell of memory can hold within
all virtue, all the beauty that we see
when looking at her eyes, signs of all worth,
the sweet key to my heart?

As long as sun turns, lady, Love has not
a dearer pledge than you.

30

Giovene donna sotto un verde lauro
vidi più bianca et più fredda che neve
non percossa dal sol molti et molt'anni;
e 'l suo parlare e 'l bel viso et le chiome
mi piacquen sì ch' i' l' ò dinanzi agli occhi
ed avrò sempre ov' io sia in poggio o 'n riva. 6

Allor saranno i miei pensieri a riva
che foglia verde non si trovi in lauro;
quando avrò queto il cor, asciutti gli occhi,
vedrem ghiacciare il foco, arder la neve;
non ò tanti capelli in queste chiome
quanti vorrei quel giorno attender anni. 12

Ma perché vola il tempo et fuggon gli anni
sì ch' a la morte in un punto s'arriva
o colle brune o colle bianche chiome,
seguirò l'ombra di quel dolce lauro
per lo più ardente sole et per la neve,
fin che l'ultimo dì chiuda quest'occhi. 18

Non fur giamai veduti sì begli occhi
o ne la nostra etade o ne' prim' anni
che mi struggon così come 'l sol neve,
onde procede lagrimosa riva
ch' Amor conduce a pie' del duro lauro
ch' à i rami di diamante et d'or le chiome. 24

I' temo di cangiar pria volto et chiome
che con vera pietà mi mostri gli occhi
l'idolo mio scolpito in vivo lauro,
ché s' al contar non erro oggi à sett' anni
che sospirando vo di riva in riva
la notte e 'l giorno, al caldo ed a la neve. 30

Dentro pur foco et for candida neve,
sol con questi pensier, con altre chiome,
sempre piangendo andrò per ogni riva,
per far forse pietà venir ne gli occhi
di tal che nascerà dopo mill' anni,
se tanto viver po ben colto lauro. 36

30

A young maiden beneath the green of laurel
I saw, more white, more cold than all that snow
unstruck by sun for many, many years;
those words of hers, her lovely face, her hair
I loved so much—I keep her in my eyes
and always shall, whether on hill or shore.

But only then will my thoughts reach the shore
when no green leaf is found upon the laurel,
when my heart is at peace and dry my eyes:
we'll see the fire freeze and blazing snow;
upon my head there is not as much hair
as years I would await the longed-for day.

But since time flies and fleeting are the years
that bring us rapidly upon death's shore,
whether it be with dark or with white hair
I'll chase the shadow of that lovely laurel
throughout the hottest day and through the snow
until the final day closes my eyes.

Never have there been seen such lovely eyes
now in our time or in the world's first years
as those that melt me as the sun does snow,
and from which springs a flow to tearful shore
that Love leads to the foot of the hard laurel
that's made of diamond branches and golden hair.

I fear that I will change in face and hair
before she shows true mercy in her eyes,
my idol who is carved in living laurel,
for if I do not err, it's seven years
today that I go sighing shore to shore,
both night and day and in the heat and snow.

Ablaze within but outside white as snow,
with thoughts like these alone and with changed hair,
I'll always go in tears on every shore,
to stir, perhaps, some pity in the eyes
of someone born here in a thousand years,
if for so long can live the cared-for laurel.

L'auro e i topacii al sol sopra la neve
vincon le bionde chiome presso a gli occhi
che menan gli anni miei sì tosto a riva. 39

31

Questa anima gentil che si diparte
anzi tempo chiamata a l'altra vita,
se lassuso è quanto esser de' gradita,
terrà del ciel la più beata parte; 4

s' ella riman fra 'l terzo lume et Marte
fia la vista del sole scolorita,
poi ch' a mirar sua bellezza infinita
l'anime degne intorno a lei fien sparte; 8

se si posasse sotto al quarto nido
ciascuna de le tre saria men bella,
et essa sola avria la fame e 'l grido; 11

nel quinto giro non abitrebbe ella,
ma se vola più alto, assai mi fido
che con Giove sia vinta ogni altra stella. 14

All gold and topaz in sun above the snow
are spent by the gold hair next to those eyes
that lead my years so quickly to the shore.

31

This gracious soul that takes its leave of us,
called to the other life before its time,
if she's as dear as she must be up there,
will occupy heaven's most blessed part.

Should she dwell between Mars and the third light,
the bright face of the sun would lose its color,
for in admiration of her endless beauty
the blessed souls will gather all around her;

if under the fourth nest she came to rest,
each of the three would look less beautiful
and she alone would have fame and renown;

she would not make her home in the fifth sphere,
but should she fly up higher, I am sure
that Jove and all the other stars would lose.

32

Quanto più m'avicino al giorno estremo
che l'umana miseria suol far breve,
più veggio il tempo andar veloce et leve
e 'l mio di lui sperar fallace et scemo. 4

I' dico a' miei pensier: "Non molto andremo
d'amor parlando omai, ché 'l duro et greve
terreno incarco come fresca neve
si va struggendo, onde noi pace avremo; 8

"perché con lui cadrà quella speranza
che ne fe' vaneggiar sì lungamente,
e 'l riso e 'l pianto, et la paura et l'ira: 11

"sì vedrem chiaro poi come sovente
per le cose dubbiose altri s'avanza,
et come spesso indarno si sospira." 14

33

Già fiammeggiava l'amorosa stella
per l'oriente, et l'altra che Giunone
suol far gelosa nel settentrione
rotava i raggi suoi lucente et bella; 4

levata era a filar la vecchiarella
discinta et scalza, et desto avea 'l carbone,
et gli amanti pungea quella stagione
che per usanza a lagrimar gli appella; 8

quando mia speme già condutta al verde
giunse nel cor non per l'usata via,
che 'l sonno tenea chiusa e 'l dolor molle— 11

quanto cangiata, oimè, da quel di pria!—
et parea dir: "Perché tuo valor perde?
Veder quest'occhi ancor non ti si tolle." 14

32

The closer that I come to the last day
that seems to shorten human misery
the more I see time running swift and light
and all my hope in him deceived and vain.

I tell my thoughts: "We won't talk much of love
for very long now, for this hard and heavy
earthly burden, like freshly fallen snow
is melting, and at last we shall know peace,

"since with the weight there also falls that hope
which made us go on raving for so long:
the laughter and the tears and fears and anger;

"then clearly we shall see how often here
one chases after things that are uncertain
and how so often one must sigh in vain."

33

The star of love already was aglow
thoughout the East, and wheeling in the North,
its rays shining and lovely, was the other
star known to fill Juno with jealousy;

the poor old woman, barefoot and undressed,
has just got up to spin and wake the coals,
and piercing lovers was that time of day
which always seems to summon them to tears,

when hope of mine, by now cut to the quick,
filled in my heart, not by the usual way,
for sleeping kept that closed and grief kept wet.

How changed, alas, from what she once had been!
She seemed to say: "Why do you lose your courage?
To see these eyes is not denied you yet."

34

Apollo, s' ancor vive il bel desio
che t'infiammava a le tesaliche onde,
et se non ài l'amate chiome bionde,
volgendo gli anni, già poste in oblio,

dal pigro gelo et dal tempo aspro et rio
che dura quanto 'l tuo viso s'asconde
difendi or l'onorata et sacra fronde
ove tu prima et poi fu' invescato io,

et per vertù de l'amorosa speme
che ti sostenne ne la vita acerba,
di queste impression l'aere disgombra;

sì vedrem poi per meraviglia inseme
seder la donna nostra sopra l'erba
et far de la sue braccia a se stessa ombra.

35

Solo et pensoso i più deserti campi
vo mesurando a passi tardi et lenti,
et gli occhi porto per fuggire intenti
ove vestigio uman la rena stampi.

Altro schermo non trovo che mi scampi
dal manifesto accorger de le genti,
perché negli atti d'allegrezza spenti
di fuor si legge com' io dentro avampi.

Sì ch' io mi credo omai che monti et piagge
et fiumi et selve sappian di che tempre
sia la mia vita, ch' è celata altrui;

ma pur sì aspre vie né sì selvagge
cercar non so ch' Amor non venga sempre
ragionando con meco, et io con lui.

34

Apollo, if the lovely wish still lives
that made you burn on Thessalian wave,
and if those blond and cherished locks of hers
you have not with the passing years forgotten,

from lazy frost and weather harsh and cruel
which lasts as long as you conceal your face,
now come defend the honored, sacred leaf
by which you first and then I, too, was snared;

and then by virtue of the amorous hope
that kept you going through your bitter life,
make clear the atmosphere of such impression;

then we shall see together, wondrously,
our lady sitting there upon the grass,
her arms casting their shade around herself.

35

Alone and deep in thought I measure out
the most deserted fields, with slow, late steps,
with eyes intent to flee whatever sign
of human footprint left within the sand.

I find no other shield for my protection
against the knowing glances of mankind,
for in my bearing all bereft of joy
one sees from outside how I burn within.

So now, I think, only the plains and mountains,
the rivers and the forests know the kind
of life I lead, the one concealed from all.

And still, I never seem to find a path
too harsh, too wild for Love to always join
me and to speak to me, and I to him!

36

S' io credesse per morte essere scarco
del pensiero amoroso che m'atterra,
colle mie mani avrei già posto in terra
queste membra noiose et quello incarco;

ma perch' io temo che sarebbe un varco
di pianto in pianto et d'una in altra guerra,
di qua dal passo ancor che mi si serra
mezzo rimango, lasso, et mezzo il varco.

Tempo ben fora omai d'avere spinto
l'ultimo stral la dispietata corda
ne l'altrui sangue già bagnato et tinto,

et io ne prego Amore, et quella sorda
che mi lassò de' suoi color depinto
et di chiamarmi a sé non le ricorda.

37

Sì è debile il filo a cui s'attene
la gravosa mia vita
che s' altri non l'aita
ella fia tosto di suo corso a riva,
però che dopo l'empia dipartita
che dal dolce mio bene
feci, sol una spene
è stato in fin a qui cagion ch' io viva,
dicendo: "Perché priva
sia de l'amata vista,
mantienti, anima trista;
che sai s' a miglior tempo anco ritorni
et a più lieti giorni,
o se 'l perduto ben mai si racquista?"
Questa speranza mi sostenne un tempo;
or vien mancando, et troppo in lei m'attempo.

36

If I thought that by death I would be lightened
of this amorous care that weighs me down,
by now, by my own hand I would have buried
these loathsome limbs of mine and that weight too;

but since I fear that it would be a passage
from grief to grief, from one war to another,
on this side of the pass still closed to me
I half remain (oh grief) and half cross over.

And it is high time that the merciless cord
release now from its bow the final arrow,
already wet and stained with others' blood;

and I beg Love for this and that deaf one
who left me painted shades of her own color
and who forgets to call me to herself.

37

So fragile is the thread on which there hangs
this heavy life of mine
that if help does not come
it will have soon run to its journey's end,
Because once I had taken my cruel leave
from that sweet good of mine,
only a single hope
allows me until now to live my life
saying: "Though you're deprived
of the beloved sight,
hold on to life, sad soul;
who knows, you may return to better times
and to more happy days,
or even regain all of the good you lost?"
This hope sustained me once upon a time,
now it declines and I grow old in it.

Il tempo passa et l'ore son sì pronte
a fornire il viaggio,
ch' assai spazio non aggio
pur a pensar com' io corro a la morte;
a pena spunta in oriente un raggio
di sol, ch' a l'altro monte
de l'adverso orizonte
giunto il vedrai per vie lunghe et distorte.
Le vite son sì corte,
sì gravi i corpi et frali
degli uomini mortali,
che quando io mi ritrovo dal bel viso
cotanto esser diviso,
col desio non possendo mover l'ali,
poco m'avanza del conforto usato,
né so quant' io mi viva in questo stato.

Ogni loco m'atrista ov' io non veggio
quei begli occhi soavi
che portaron le chiavi
de' miei dolci pensier mentre a Dio piacque,
et perché 'l duro esilio più m'aggravi,
s' io dormo o vado o seggio
altro giamai non cheggio,
et ciò ch' i' vidi dopo lor mi spiacque.
Quante montagne et acque,
quanto mar, quanti fiumi
m'ascondon que' duo lumi
che quasi un bel sereno a mezzo 'l die
fer le tenebre mie
a ciò che 'l rimembrar più mi consumi,
et quanto era mia vita allor gioiosa
m'insegni la presente aspra et noiosa.

Lasso, se ragionando si rinfresca
quell'ardente desio
che nacque il giorno ch' io
lassai di me la miglior parte a dietro,
et s' amor se ne va per lungo oblio,
chi mi conduce a l'esca
onde 'l mio dolor cresca,
et perché pria tacendo non m'impetro?

Time flies and every hour is so quick
to terminate the journey
that there's not time enough
for me to think of how I race to death;
as soon as you see in the East a ray
of sun you see it reach
the opposite horizon
arrived along its long and coiling path.
So short is every life,
so heavy and so frail
mankind's mortal body,
that when I find myself from that sweet face
so greatly separated,
without power to fly with my desire,
little is left me of my usual comfort,
nor do I know how long I'll live like this.

I grieve in every place I cannot see
those lovely, gracious eyes
that carried off the keys
of my sweet thoughts as long as it pleased God,
and so that my hard exile be more painful,
when sleeping, walking, sitting
I beg for nothing else,
and having seen them, nothing gives me pleasure.
How many hills and brooks,
how many seas and streams
hide those two lights from me
that like the clarity of noonday skies
would make all of my darkness,
so that remembering may consume me more
and that from my bitter and burdened present
I may learn how my life was joyous then.

Alas, if talking this way can renew
that ardent wish of mine
born on the day that I
had left behind me the best part of me,
and if with long forgetfulness love fades,
who leads me to the bait
so that my grief grows greater?
Why not choose silence first and turn to stone?

Certo, cristallo o vetro
non mostrò mai di fore
nascosto altro colore
che l'alma sconsolata assai non mostri
più chiari i pensier nostri
et la fera dolcezza ch' è nel core
per gli occhi, che di sempre pianger vaghi
cercan dì et notte pur chi glie n'appaghi.

Novo piacer che ne gli umani ingegni
spesse volte si trova,
d'amar qual cosa nova
più folta schiera di sospiri accoglia!
Et io son un di quei che 'l pianger giova,
et par ben ch' io m'ingegni
che di lagrime pregni
sien gli occhi miei, sì come 'l cor di doglia.
Et perché a ciò m'invoglia
ragionar de' begli occhi
né cosa è che mi tocchi
o sentir mi si faccia così a dentro,
corro spesso et rientro
colà donde più largo il duol trabocchi
et sien col cor punite ambe le luci
ch' a la strada d'Amor mi furon duci.

Le treccie d'or che devrien fare il sole
d'invidia molta ir pieno,
e 'l bel guardo sereno
ove i raggi d'Amor sì caldi sono,
che mi fanno anzi tempo venir meno,
et l'accorte parole
rade nel mondo, o sole,
che mi fer già di sé cortese dono
mi son tolte, et perdono
più lieve ogni altra offesa
che l'essermi contesa
quella benigna angelica salute
che 'l mio cor a vertute
destar solea con una voglia accesa,
tal ch' io non penso udir cosa giamai
che mi conforte ad altro ch' a trar guai.

For certain, glass or crystal
never revealed more clearly
its inside, hidden color
than my disconsolate soul makes manifest
the thoughts inside of me
and all the savage sweetness in the heart
seen through the eyes, ready always to weep,
that night and day seek her alone who calms them.

How strange the pleasure that is often found
within the human mind
to love any strange thing
that brings with it the thickest swarm of sighs!
And I am one of those who thrives on weeping,
who seems to put his mind
to keeping full of tears
my eyes, just as my heart is full of sorrow.
Since speaking of those eyes
involves me in this state
(nothing touches me more
or moves me to the depths of my insides),
I often run and hide
therein so that my grief may overflow
and both my eyes be punished with my heart
because they were my guides along Love's road.

The golden hair that ought to make the sun
revolve in all its envy,
the lovely, quiet glance
wherein the rays of Love burn with such heat
that they melt me away before my time,
and those decorous words
rare in the world, unique,
which were bestowed on me so courteously,
are gone now, and I pardon
all other wrongs more easily
than to have been denied
the graciousness of her angelic greeting
which would wake up my heart
to virtue set aflame by such desire,
I cannot hope to ever hear a thing
to comfort me more than my heaving sighs.

Et per pianger ancor con più diletto,
le man bianche sottili
et le braccia gentili
et gli atti suoi soavemente alteri
e i dolci sdegni alteramente umili
e 'l bel giovenil petto,
torre d'alto intelletto,
mi celan questi luoghi alpestri et feri, 104
et non so s' io mi speri
vederla anzi ch' io mora;
però ch' ad ora ad ora
s'erge la speme et poi non sa star ferma,
ma ricadendo afferma
di mai non veder lei che 'l ciel onora,
ov' alberga onestate et cortesia,
et dov' io prego che 'l mio albergo sia. 112

Canzon, s' al dolce loco
la donna nostra vedi,
credo ben che tu credi
ch' ella ti porgerà la bella mano
ond' io son sì lontano;
non la toccar, ma reverente ai piedi
le di' ch' io sarò là tosto ch' io possa,
o spirto ignudo od uom di carne et d'ossa. 120

That I may weep with still greater delight,
the white and slender hands,
and graciousness of arms
and all her movements beautifully proud,
and her disdain, sweet and so proudly humble,
and the fair, youthful breast;
the tower of high intellect,
these wild and rocky places hide from me,
and can I hope to see her
again before I die;
because hour after hour
hope surges but cannot sustain itself,
and falling reaffirms
it shall not see the one whom Heaven honors,
in whom dwells honesty and courtesy,
and where I pray that I may make my home.

Song, if in that sweet place
you come to see our lady,
I know that you, too, know
that she will offer you her lovely hand
from which I am so distant;
do not touch it, but kneeling at her feet
tell her I'll be there soon as possible
as naked soul or man of flesh and bone.

38

Orso, e' non furon mai fiumi né stagni
né mare ov' ogni rivo si disgombra,
né di muro o di poggio o di ramo ombra,
né nebbia che 'l ciel copra e 'l mondo bagni,

né altro impedimento ond' io mi lagni,
qualunque più l'umana vista ingombra,
quanto d'un vel che due begli occhi adombra
et par che dica: "Or ti consuma et piagni."

Et quel lor inchinar ch' ogni mia gioia
spegne o per umiltate o per orgoglio
cagion sarà che 'nanzi tempo i' moia.

Et d'una bianca mano anco mi doglio
ch' è stata sempre accorta a farmi noia
et contra gli occhi miei s'è fatta scoglio.

39

Io temo sì de' begli occhi l'assalto
ne' quali Amore et la mia morte alberga,
ch' i' fuggo lor come fanciul la verga,
et gran tempo è ch' i' presi il primier salto.

Da ora inanzi faticoso od alto
loco non fia dove 'l voler non s'erga
per no scontrar chi miei sensi disperga
lassando, come suol, me freddo smalto.

Dunque s' a veder voi tardo mi volsi
per non ravvicinarmi a chi mi strugge,
fallir forse non fu di scusa indegno.

Più dico, che 'l tornar a quel ch' uom fugge
e'l cor che di paura tanta sciolsi
fur de la fede mia non leggier pegno.

38

Orso, there never was a lake nor pond nor river
nor sea where every stream unloads its waters,
nor shadow of a wall or hill or branch
nor fog that covers sky and wets the world,

nor other obstacle that I can blame,
however much it hinders human sight,
more than a veil that shades two lovely eyes
and seems to say: "Now weep and waste away."

That downward glance of theirs which all my joy
smothers through pride or through humility
will be the cause of early death for me.

And I complain as well of a white hand
that always has been quick to do me harm
rising against my eyes just like a reef.

39

I fear so that attack of lovely eyes
in which Love and my death both make their home,
I run from them as a child flees the rod,
and time has passed since I took my first leap.

From now on there exists no hard or high
place my desire will not seek to climb
in order not to have my senses scattered
by one who's wont to leave me as cold stone.

If I return so late to see you, then,
not to be near the one who makes me suffer,
it is, perhaps, a fault that's worth forgiving.

I add: that to return to what man flees
and with a heart freed of so great a fear
were no small pledge of faith I bear toward you.

40

S' Amore o Morte non dà qualche stroppio
a la tela novella ch' ora ordisco,
et s' io mi svolvo dal tenace visco
mentre che l'un coll'altro vero accoppio, 4

i' farò forse un mio lavor sì doppio
tra lo stil de' moderni e 'l sermon prisco
che (paventosamente a dirlo ardisco)
in fin a Roma n'udirai lo scoppio. 8

Ma però che mi manca a fornir l'opra
alquanto de le fila benedette
ch' avanzaro a quel mio diletto padre, 11

perché tien verso me le man sì strette
contra tua usanza? I' prego che tu l'opra,
et vedrai riuscir cose leggiadre. 14

41

Quando dal proprio sito si rimove
l'arbor ch' amò già Febo in corpo umano,
sospira et suda a l'opera Vulcano
per rinfrescar l'aspre saette a Giove, 4

il qual or tona or nevica et or piove
senza onorar più Cesare che Giano;
la terra piange e 'l sol ci sta lontano
che la sua cara amica ved' altrove. 8

Allor riprende ardir Saturno et Marte,
crudeli stelle, et Orione armato
spezza a' tristi nocchier governi et sarte. 11

Eolo a Nettuno et a Giunon turbato
fa sentire et a noi come si parte
il bel viso dagli angeli aspettato. 14

40

If Love or Death does not come to cut short
this new cloth which I now prepare for weaving,
and I can free myself from the thick glue
while I am joining one truth with the other,

I shall, perhaps, compose a work so doubled
between the modern style and ancient tongue
that then (and I dare say it, fearfully)
as far as Rome you'll hear the bang it makes.

But since I'm missing to complete the work
a number of the venerable threads
that were so plenteous to my cherished father,

Why are your hands so tightly shut to me?
—it's not like you. I beg you, open them,
and you will see delightful things pour forth.

41

When from its proper dwelling place departs
the tree that Phoebus loved in human form,
then Vulcan pants and sweats over his work
in order to replenish Jove's fierce bolts,

who now thunders, now snows and sometimes rains
without respecting Caesar more than Janus;
the earth weeps and the sun stays far away
because he sees his dear friend somewhere else.

Then Mars and Saturn regain all their boldness—
harshest planets, and the armed Orion
shatters the luckless sailors' shrouds and rudders;

Aeolus, angry, shows Neptune and Juno
and us, too, how it feels when she departs
with that sweet face awaited by the angels.

42

Ma poi che 'l dolce riso umile et piano
più non asconde sue bellezze nove,
le braccia a la fucina indarno move
l'antiquissimo fabbro ciciliano; 4

ch' a Giove tolte son l'arme di mano
temprate in Mongibello a tutte prove,
et sua sorella par che si rinove
nel bel guardo d'Apollo a mano a mano. 8

Del lito occidental si move un fiato
che fa securo il navigar senza arte
et desta i fior tra l'erba in ciascun prato; 11

stelle noiose fuggon d'ogni parte,
disperse dal bel viso inamorato
per cui lagrime molte son già sparte. 14

43

Il figliuol di Latona avea già nove
volte guardato dal balcon sovrano
per quella ch' alcun tempo mosse in vano
i suoi sospiri et or gli altrui commove; 4

poi che cercando stanco non seppe ove
s'albergasse da presso o di lontano,
mostrossi a noi qual uom per doglia insano
che molto amata cosa non ritrove. 8

Et così tristo standosi in disparte,
tornar non vide il viso che laudato
sarà, s' io vivo, in più di mille carte, 11

et pietà lui medesmo avea cangiato
sì che' begli occhi lagrimavan parte:
però l'aere ritenne il primo stato. 14

42

But now that the sweet smile, humble, serene,
no longer hides its beauties so unusual,
in vain around the forge he works his arms,
the very ancient smith of Sicily;

Jove's weapons have been taken from his hands,
those tempered to all proof in Mongibello;
his sister slowly seems to be renewing
beneath Apollo's beautiful array.

And from the western shore there comes a breeze
that makes it safe to sail without precaution
and wakens fields of flowers in the grass;

malignant planets flee from every side
dispersed by beauty of her loving face
for which so many tears have now been shed.

43

Latona's son already had looked nine
times from his lofty balcony in search
of her who once had moved in vain his sighs
and now excites the sighs of someone else;

when, weary from his searching, he could not
find where she lived, nearby or faraway,
he looked to us like one gone mad with grief
at having lost something he greatly treasured.

And so, in sadness fixed off by himself,
he did not see the face return whose praise,
if I live on, shall fill thousands of pages,

and he himself was changed by his compassion
while from her lovely eyes she poured her tears,
but all the air retained its previous state.

44

Que' che 'n Tesaglia ebbe le man sì pronte
a farla del civil sangue vermiglia
pianse morto il marito di sua figlia
raffigurato a le fatezze conte; 4

e 'l pastor ch' a Golia ruppe la fronte
pianse la ribellante sua famiglia,
et sopra 'l buon Saul cangiò le ciglia,
ond' assai può dolersi il fiero monte. 8

Ma voi, che mai pietà non discolora
et ch' avete gli schermi sempre accorti
contra l'arco d'Amor che 'ndarno tira, 11

mi vedete straziare a mille morti
né lagrima però discese ancora
da' be' vostr'occhi, ma disdegno et ira. 14

45

Il mio adversario in cui veder solete
gli occhi vostri ch' Amore e 'l Ciel onora
colle non sue bellezze v'innamora
più che 'n guisa mortal soavi et liete. 4

Per consiglio di lui, Donna, m'avete
scacciato del mio dolce albergo fora:
misero esilio! avegna ch' i' non fora
d'abitar degno ove voi sola siete. 8

Ma s' io v'era con saldi chiovi fisso,
non dovea specchio farvi per mio danno
a voi stessa piacendo aspra et superba. 11

Certo, se vi rimembra di Narcisso,
questo et quel corso ad un termino vanno—
ben che di sì bel fior sia indegna l'erba. 14

44

The man in Thessaly with hands so anxious
to turn it crimson bathed in civil blood,
wept for the death of his own daughter's husband
recognized by his features known to all;

the shepherd, too, who broke Goliath's brow
wept hard for his rebellious family
and changed expression over the good Saul
whence the wild mountain has much cause to grieve;

but you whom pity never can discolor
and who always have your defenses ready
against Love's bow which does not hit its mark,

you see me torn a thousand times to death
and not a tear as yet have I seen fall
from your fair eyes, only disdain and anger.

45

My enemy in which you often see
those eyes of yours that Love and Heaven honor
enamors you with beauties not its own
but sweet and happy supernaturally.

On his advice, lady, you have expelled me
from the sweet place that I had made my home:
miserable exile! though I may not be
worthy to dwell where you alone reside.

But since I had been fixed there by strong nails,
no mirror should have made you harsh and proud
against me since you pleased yourself therein.

Indeed, if you recall to mind Narcissus,
both this and that course lead to the same end—
although no grass is fit for such a flower.

46

L'oro et le perle e i fior vermigli e i bianchi
che 'l verno devria far languidi et secchi
son per me acerbi et velenosi stecchi
ch' io provo per lo petto et per li fianchi. 4

Però i dì miei fien lagrimosi et manchi,
ché gran duol rade volte aven che 'nvecchi;
ma più ne colpo i micidiali specchi
che 'n vagheggiar voi stessa avete stanchi. 8

Questi poser silenzio al signor mio
che per me vi pregava, ond' ei si tacque
veggendo in voi finir vostro desio; 11

questi fuor fabbricati sopra l'acque
d'abisso et tinti ne l'eterno oblio
onde 'l principio de mia morte nacque. 14

47

Io sentia dentr' al cor già venir meno
gli spirti che da voi ricevon vita;
et perché naturalmente s'aita
contra la morte ogni animal terreno, 4

largai 'l desio che i' teng' or molto a freno
et misil per la via quasi smarrita
però che dì e notte indi m'invita
et io contra sua voglia altronde 'l meno, 8

et mi condusse vergognoso et tardo
a riveder gli occhi leggiadri ond' io
per non esser lor grave assai mi guardo. 11

Vivrommi un tempo omai, ch' al viver mio
tanta virtude à sol un vostro sguardo;
et poi morrò, s' io non credo al desio. 14

46

The gold and pearls, the flowers red and white
that winter should have weakened and dried up
are only bitter, poisonous thorns for me
that I feel in my breast and in my sides.

And so my days will be tearful and short,
for seldom does great sorrow grow in years;
but I accuse those murderous mirrors more
that you, loving yourself, have tired out.

And they imposed silence upon my lord
who prayed to you for me, and he was speechless
to see that your desire was for you;

such mirrors were constructed on Hell's waters
and tempered in forgetfulness eternal
whence the beginning of my death was born.

47

I felt within my heart already failing
those spirits that receive their life from you;
and since against death it is nature's rule
for every mortal animal to fight,

I freed desire, that now I keep in check,
and put it on the path I almost lost
(though night and day it calls me to be there,
against its will I lead it somewhere else),

and then he led me, late and full of shame
to see again your lovely eyes which I,
not to offend them, carefully avoid.

I'll have a little longer now to live,
for one glance has such power for my life;
I'll die then if I don't obey desire.

48

Se mai foco per foco non si spense
né fiume fu giamai secco per pioggia,
ma sempre l'un per l'altro simil poggia
et spesso l'un contrario l'altro accense, 4

Amor, tu che' pensier nostri dispense,
al qual un'alma in due corpi s'appoggia,
perché fai in lei con disusata foggia
men per molto voler le voglie intense? 8

Forse sì come 'l Nil d'alto caggendo
col gran suono i vicin d'intorno assorda,
e'l sole abbaglia chi ben fiso 'l guarda, 11

così 'l desio che seco non s'accorda
ne lo sfrenato obietto vien perdendo,
et per troppo spronar la fuga è tarda. 14

49

Perch' io t'abbia guardata di menzogna
a mio podere et onorato assai,
ingrata lingua, già però non m'ài
renduto onor, ma fatto ira et vergogna; 4

ché quanto più 'l tuo aiuto mi bisogna
per dimandar mercede, allor ti stai
sempre più fredda, et se parole fai
son imperfette et quasi d'uom che sogna! 8

Lagrime triste, et voi tutte le notti
m'accompagnate ov' io vorrei star solo,
poi fuggite dinanzi a la mia pace! 11

Et voi, sì pronti a darmi angoscia et duolo,
sospiri, allor traete lenti et rotti!
Solo la vista mia del cor non tace. 14

48

If fire by fire has never been extinguished
nor river ever dried up by the rain,
but always things alike grow with their like,
and often contrasts will increase each other,

Love, you the ruler of our every thought,
on whom depends one soul within two bodies,
why in my soul, contrarily, do you,
by wanting much, strengthen desire less?

Perhaps, just as the Nile that falls from high
with its great sound deafens all those nearby,
as sun dazzles the one who stares at it,

so a desire that is not in proportion
loses itself in something too immense,
and too much spurring can slow down the flight.

49

Though I have always kept you from all lies
as best I could and paid you greatest honor,
ungrateful tongue, you, nonetheless have never
repaid the honor, but brought me shame and anger;

the more I am in need of your assistance
to ask for mercy, all the more you grow
still colder, and should you utter some words,
they are broken, as spoken in a dream.

Tears full of grief, you too through all those nights
are with me when I'd rather stay alone,
then you desert me when my peace is present!

And you, so quick to bring me grief and pain,
my sighs, at that point come forth slow and broken!
Only my look breaks silence for the heart.

50

Ne la stagion che 'l ciel rapido inchina
verso occidente, et che 'l dì nostro vola
a gente che di là forse l'aspetta,
veggendosi in lontan paese sola
la stanca vecchiarella pellegrina
raddoppia i passi et più et più s'affretta; 6
et poi così soletta
al fin di sua giornata
talora è consolata
d'alcun breve riposo, ov' ella oblia
la noia e 'l mal de la passata via.
Ma, lasso, ogni dolor che 'l dì m'adduce
cresce qualor s'invia
per partirsi da noi l'eterna luce. 14

Come 'l sol volga le 'nfiammate rote
per dar luogo a la notte, onde discende
dagli altissimi monti maggior l'ombra,
l'avaro zappador l'arme riprende
et con parole et con alpestri note
ogni gravezza del suo petto sgombra; 20
et poi la mensa ingombra
di povere vivande
simili a quelle ghiande
le qua' fuggendo tutto 'l mondo onora.
Ma chi vuol si rallegri ad ora ad ora,
ch' i' pur non ebbi ancor, non dirò lieta,
ma riposata un'ora,
né per volger di ciel né di pianeta. 28

Quando vede 'l pastor calare i raggi
del gran pianeta al nido ov' egli alberga
e 'mbrunir le contrade d'oriente,
drizzasi in piedi et co l'usata verga,
lassando l'erba et le fontane e i faggi,
move la schiera sua soavemente; 34
poi lontan da la gente
o casetta o spelunca
di verdi frondi ingiunca,
ivi senza pensier s'adagia et dorme.

50

It is the time the rapid heavens bend
toward the West, the time our own day flees
to some expectant race beyond, perhaps,
the time an old and weary pilgrim-woman
feeling the loneliness of foreign lands,
doubles her pace, hastening more and more;
and then at her day's end,
though she is all alone,
at least she is consoled
by resting and forgetting for awhile
the labour and the pain of her past road.
But, oh, whatever pain the day brings me
grows more and more the moment
the eternal light begins to fade from us.

When the sun's burning wheels begin to flame,
in order to give way to night, and shadows
are now cast deeper by the highest mountains,
the avid workman packs away his tools
and with the words of mountain songs he clears
the weight of that day's labour from his chest;
and then he spreads his table
all full of meager food
like acorns of whose praises
the whole world sings and manages to shun.
But let who will find joy from time to time,
for I've not had, I will not say a happy,
but just one restful hour,
for all the turning of the sky and stars.

And when the shepherd sees the great sphere's rays
are falling toward the nest in which it dwells
and in the east the country turning dark,
he stands up straight and with his trusty crook,
he leaves the grass and springs and beech's shade,
moving his flock quietly on its way;
then far away from people
a hut or kind of cave
he weaves out of green leaves,
and there without a care he lies and sleeps.

Ahi crudo Amor, ma tu allor più m'informe
a seguir d'una fera che mi strugge
la voce e i passi et l'orme,
et lei non stringi che s'appiatta et fugge.

E i naviganti in qualche chiusa valle
gettan le membra, poi che 'l sol s'asconde,
sul duro legno et sotto a l'aspre gonne.
Ma io, perché s'attuffi in mezzo l'onde
et lasci Ispagna dietro a le sue spalle
et Granata et Marrocco et le Colonne,
et gli uomini e le donne
e 'l mondo et gli animali
acquetino i lor mali,
fine non pongo al mio ostinato affanno;
et duolmi ch' ogni giorno arroge al danno,
ch' i' son già pur crescendo in questa voglia
ben presso al decim' anno,
né poss' indovinar chi me ne scioglia.

Et perché un poco nel parlar mi sfogo,
veggio la sera i buoi tornare sciolti
da le campagne et da' solcati colli.
I miei sospiri a me perché non tolti
quando che sia? perché no 'l grave giogo?
perché dì et notte gli occhi miei son molli?
Misero me, che volli
quando primier sì fiso
gli tenni nel bel viso
per iscolpirlo, imaginando, in parte
onde mai né per forza né per arte
mosso sarà fin ch' i' sia dato in preda
a chi tutto diparte!
né so ben anco che di lei mi creda.

Canzon, se l'esser meco
dal matino a la sera
t'à fatto di mia schiera,
tu non vorrai mostrarti in ciascun loco;
et d'altrui loda curerai sì poco
ch' assai ti fia pensar di poggio in poggio
come m'à concio 'l foco
di questa viva petra ov' io m'appoggio.

But, ah, cruel Love, you drive me on to chase
the voice, the steps, the prints of a wild beast
who is destroying me;
you do not catch her: she crouches and she flees.

And sailors on their ship when sun is set
in some protected cove let their limbs drop
upon hard boards and sleep beneath coarse canvas.
But I, though sun may dive into the waves
and leave behind his back all that is Spain,
Granada and Morocco and the Pillars,
and though all men and women,
animals and the world
may come to calm their ills—
yet I cannot end my insistent anguish;
it pains me that each day augments my grief,
for here I am still growing in this love
for nearly ten years now,
wondering who will ever set me free.

And (to relieve my pain a bit by talking)
I see at evening oxen coming home,
freed from the fields and furrows they have ploughed—
why, then, must I not be free of my sighs
at least sometimes? Why not my heavy yoke?
Why day and night must my eyes still be wet?
Oh what I did that time
when I fixed them upon
the beauty of her face
to carve it in my heart's imagination
whence neither by coercion nor by art
could it be moved—not till I am the prey
of one who all does part!
And could she even then I am not sure.

My song, if being with me
from morning until night
has made you join my party,
you will not show yourself in any place
and will care little to be praised by others—
it will suffice to think from hill to hill
how I have been consumed
by fire of the living stone I cling to.

51

Poco era ad appressarsi agli occhi miei
la luce che da lunge gli abbarbaglia,
che, come vide lei cangiar Tesaglia,
così cangiato ogni mia forma avrei. 4

Et s' io non posso trasformarmi in lei
più ch' i' mi sia (non ch' a mercé mi vaglia),
di qual petra più rigida s'intaglia
pensoso ne la vista oggi sarei, 8

o di diamante, o d'un bel marmo bianco
per la paura forse, o d'un diaspro
pregiato poi dal vulgo avaro et sciocco; 11

et sarei fuor del grave giogo et aspro
per cui i' ò invidia di quel vecchio stanco
che fa co le sue spalle ombra a Marrocco. 14

52

Non al suo amante più Diana piacque
quando per tal ventura tutta ignuda
la vide in mezzo de le gelide acque, 3

ch' a me la pastorella alpestra et cruda
posta a bagnar un leggiadretto velo
ch' a l'aura il vago et biondo capel chiuda; 6

tal che mi fece, or quand' egli arde 'l cielo,
tutto tremar d'un amoroso gielo. 8

51

Had it come any closer to my eyes,
the light that dazzles even from afar,
then, just as Thessaly saw how she changed
so I would have changed every part of me.

And if I cannot change into her form
more than I have (not that it wins me mercy),
today I would be like the hardest piece
of stone to cut, my face chiseled in care,

a diamond or some lovely marble, white,
perhaps from fear, or even a piece of crystal
prized by the foolish and the greedy folk;

and I'd be free of the harsh, heavy yoke
that makes me envy the old, tired man
whose shoulders cast their shade upon Morocco.

52

Diana never pleased her lover more,
when just by chance all of her naked body
he saw bathing within the chilly waters,

than did the simple mountain shepherdess
please me, the while she bathed the pretty veil
that holds her lovely blonde hair in the breeze.

So that even now in hot sunlight she makes me
tremble all over with the chill of love.

53

Spirto gentil che quelle membra reggi
dentro a le qua' peregrinando alberga
un signor valoroso accorto et saggio:
poi che se' giunto a l'onorata verga
colla qual Roma et suoi erranti correggi
et la richiami al suo antiquo viaggio,
io parlo a te però ch' altrove un raggio
non veggio di vertù, ch' al mondo è spenta,
né trovo chi di mal far si vergogni.
Che s'aspetti non so, né che s'agogni
Italia, che suoi guai non par che senta,
vecchia oziosa et lenta;
dormirà sempre et non fia chi la svegli?
Le man l'avess' io avolto entro' capegli!

Non spero che giamai dal pigro sonno
mova la testa per chiamar ch' uom faccia,
sì gravemente è oppressa et di tal soma;
ma non senza destino a le tue braccia
che scuoter forte et sollevar la ponno
è or commesso il nostro capo Roma.
Pon man in quella venerabil chioma
securamente, et ne le trecce sparte,
sì che la neghittosa esca del fango.
I' che dì et notte del suo strazio piango
di mia speranza ò in te la maggior parte,
ché se 'l popol di Marte
devesse al proprio onore alzar mai gli occhi,
parmi pur ch' a' tuoi dì la grazia tocchi.

L'antiche mura ch' ancor teme et ama
et trema 'l mondo quando si rimembra
del tempo andato e 'n dietro si rivolve,
e i sassi dove fur chiuse le membra
di ta' che non saranno senza fama
se l'universo pria non si dissolve,
et tutto quel ch' una ruina involve,
per te spera saldar ogni suo vizio.
O grandi Scipioni, o fedel Bruto,
quanto v'aggrada s' egli è ancor venuto

53

Noble spirit, you who informs those members
inside of which there dwells in pilgrimage
a lord of valor who is keen and wise:
now that you have achieved the honored staff
with which you guide Rome and its erring people
and call her back to her old way of life,
to you I speak for I see nowhere else
that virtuous ray extinguished in the world
and find no one ashamed of doing wrong.
For what Italy waits or yearns I know not,
for she does not appear to feel her woes—
she's idle, slow, and old;
will no one wake her, will she sleep forever?
If only I could grab her by the hair!

I have no hope she'll ever move her head
in sluggish sleep, loud as the shouts may be,
so gravely she's oppressed and by such weight;
but destiny now places in your arms,
that can shake her with strength and wake her up,
the head of all of us, the city Rome.
Now get your hands into those venerable locks
with confidence, into her unkept hair,
and pull the lazy one out of the mud.
I who all night and day weep for her torment
have placed almost all of my hope in you
for if Mars' progeny
should ever raise their eyes to their own honor,
it seems such grace will come in your own times.

The ancient walls which all the world still fears
and loves and trembles, every time it thinks
of turning back to look at those past times,
recalling those tombstones which hold the bodies
of men who will not be without great fame
until our universe dissolves away,
and everything involving this one ruin,
through you they hope to mend all of the faults.
O great Scipioni, O faithful Brutus,
how pleased you must be now if news has reached you

romor là giù del ben locato offizio!
Come cre' che Fabrizio
si faccia lieto udendo la novella,
et dice: "Roma mia sarà ancor bella!"

Et se cosa di qua nel ciel si cura,
l'anime che lassù son cittadine
et ànno i corpi abandonati in terra
del lungo odio civil ti pregan fine
per cui la gente ben non s'assecura,
onde 'l camin a' lor tetti si serra,
che fur già sì devoti, et ora in guerra
quasi spelunca di ladron son fatti,
tal ch' a' buon solamente uscio si chiude,
et tra gli altari et tra le statue ignude
ogni impresa crudel par che se tratti
(deh quanto diversi atti!),
né senza squille s'incomincia assalto
che per Dio ringraziar fur poste in alto.

Le donne lagrimose, e 'l vulgo inerme
de la tenera etate, e i vecchi stanchi
ch' ànno sé in odio et la soverchia vita,
e i neri fraticelli, e i bigi, e i bianchi,
coll'altre schiere travagliate e 'nferme,
gridan: "O signor nostro, aita, aita!"
et la povera gente sbigottita
ti scopre le sue piaghe a mille a mille,
ch' Anibale, non ch' altri, farian pio.
Et se ben guardi a la magion di Dio
ch' arde oggi tutta, assai poche faville
spegnendo fien tranquille
le voglie che si mostran sì 'nfiammate,
onde fien l'opre tue nel ciel laudate.

Orsi, lupi, leoni, aquile, et serpi
ad una gran marmorea colonna
fanno noia sovente et a sé danno;
di costor piange quella gentil donna
che t'à chiamato a ciò che di lei sterpi
le male piante che fiorir non sanno.
Passato è già più che 'l millesimo anno

down there of how well placed this office is!
To think how very glad
Fabricius must have been to hear such news;
he says: "My Rome you shall once more be lovely."

And if the heavens care for things down here,
then all those citizen-souls who dwell up there
whose bodies were abandoned here on earth,
pray that you end this lengthy, civil hatred
because of which the people are not safe
and which has closed the pathway to their temples,
so well attended once, and now in war
have been transformed into a den of thieves,
whose doors are closed only to men of good,
and there among their altars and bare statues
all kinds of cruel activity takes place—
ah, how diverse those acts—
nor do they start attacking without bells
placed there on high to give thanks to our God.

Women in tears and the defenseless throng
of all the young and all the old and tired
who hate themselves and their lives overlived
and the black friars and the grey, the white,
and all the other groups of sick and weary
cry out: "O Lord of ours, help us, help us!"
and all of these poor people in bewilderment,
thousands and thousands show you all their wounds
which would make even Hannibal feel pity.
And if you take a good look at God's house
that's all aflame today, by putting out a few
sparks you could calm these wills
that show that they are so enflamed today;
whereby your good works will be praised in Heaven.

The bears and wolves, the lions, eagles, and snakes
to a great column that is made of marble
give trouble, and they often harm themselves;
because of them that noble lady weeps
that called for you to uproot from herself
all those bad plants that know not how to flower.
More than a thousand years have now gone by

che 'n lei mancar quell'anime leggiadre
che locata l'avean là dov' ell' era.
Ahi nova gente oltra misura altera,
irreverente a tanta et a tal madre!
Tu marito, tu padre:
ogni soccorso di tua man s'attende,
che 'l maggior padre ad altr' opera intende. 84

Rade volte adiven ch' a l'alte imprese
fortuna ingiuriosa non contrasti,
ch' a gli animosi fatti mal s'accorda.
Ora sgombrando 'l passo onde tu intrasti
famisi perdonar molt' altre offese,
ch' al men qui da se stessa si discorda; 90
peró che quanto 'l mondo si ricorda
ad uom mortal non fu aperta la via
per farsi, come a te, di fama eterno,
che puoi drizzar, s' i' non falso discerno,
in stato la più nobil monarchia.
Quanta gloria ti fia
dir: "Gli altri l'aitar giovene et forte,
questi in vecchiezza la scampò da morte." 98

Sopra 'l monte Tarpeio, canzon, vedrai
un cavalier ch' Italia tutta onora,
pensoso più d'altrui che di se stesso.
Digli: "Un che non ti vide ancor da presso,
se non come per fama uom s'innamora,
dice che Roma ogniora
con gli occhi di dolor bagnati et molli
ti chier mercé da tutti sette i colli." 106

since all those noble souls did pass away
that made her what she was in their own day.
Ah, you newcomers haughty beyond limits,
irreverent to a mother great as she!
Be husband, be her father!
All help we wait to come from your own hand—
the greater Father is fixed on other work.

Rarely it happens that injurious Fortune
is not in conflict with high undertakings
for she does not agree with daring deeds.
Now, having cleared the way by which you entered,
she leads me to forgive all her misdeeds,
for here, at least, she differs from herself;
in all the time this world of ours remembers
was the way not clear to mortal man as now
it is to you, to reach eternal fame,
for you can raise that monarchy most noble
up on its feet, if I am not mistaken.
What glory to hear said:
"The others helped her in her youth and strength,
but he saved her from death when she was old."

Upon Tarpeian Mount, my song, you'll see
a knight to whom all Italy pays honor,
who thinks of others more than of himself.
Tell him: "One who's not seen you yet up close,
but only as one falls in love through fame,
says Rome keeps begging you
with eyes all wet and dripping with its pain,
from all her seven hills to show her mercy."

54

Perch' al viso d'Amor portava insegna,
mosse una pellegrina il mio cor vano,
ch' ogni altra mi parea d'onor men degna;

et lei seguendo su per l'erbe verdi,
udi' dir alta voce di lontano:
"Ahi quanti passi per la selva perdi!"

Allor mi strinsi a l'ombra d'un bel faggio
tutto pensoso, e rimirando intorno
vidi assai periglioso il mio viaggio;
et tornai in dietro quasi a mezzo 'l giorno.

55

Quel foco ch' i' pensai che fosse spento
dal freddo tempo et da l'età men fresca
fiamma et martir ne l'anima rinfresca.

Non fur mai tutte spente, a quel ch' i' veggio,
ma ricoperte alquanto le faville,
et temo no 'l secondo error sia peggio.
Per lagrime ch' i' spargo a mille a mille
conven che 'l duol per gli occhi si distille
dal cor, ch' à seco le faville et l'esca,
non pur qual fu, ma pare a me che cresca.

Qual foco non avrian già spento et morto
l'onde che gli occhi tristi versan sempre?
Amor, avegna mi sia tardi accorto,
vol che tra duo contrari mi distempre,
et tende lacci in sì diverse tempre
che quand' ò più speranza che 'l cor n'esca,
allor più nel bel viso mi rinvesca.

54

Because she bore Love's colors in her face
a pilgrim soul moved my unsteady heart—
all others seemed less worthy of my honor;

and as I followed her along green grass,
I heard cry out in loud voice from afar:
"How many steps you're wasting in the woods!"

Then I sought shade beneath a handsome beech;
full of my thought, and looking all around,
I saw how very dangerous was my voyage;
then I turned to go back around midday.

55

That fire which I thought had been extinguished
by the cold times and by an age less fresh
renews the flame and suffering of my soul.

Not all those sparks died out, as I can see,
but they were merely covered up a bit—
I fear my second error might be worse.
By means of tears I scatter by the thousands
the pain I feel must drip out of my heart
that holds within it both the sparks and tinder,
not as before, but I think it grows more.

What fire still could burn and not be killed
by floods that my sad eyes keep pouring forth?
Love, even though I realized it late,
between two opposites wants me to struggle,
and he puts out snares of such different types
that when I hope the most to free my heart,
he captures me the more with her fair face.

56

Se col cieco desir che ’l cor distrugge
contando l’ore no m’inganno io stesso,
ora mentre ch’ io parlo il tempo fugge
ch’ a me fu insieme et a mercé promesso.

Qual ombra è sì crudel che ’l seme adugge
ch’ al disiato frutto era sì presso?
et dentro dal mio ovil qual fera rugge?
tra la spiga et la man qual muro è messo?

Lasso, nol so, ma sì conosco io bene
che per far più dogliosa la mia vita
Amor m’addusse in sì gioiosa spene;

et or di quel ch’ i’ ò letto mi sovene,
che ’nanzi al dì de l’ultima partita
uom beato chiamar non si convene.

57

Mie venture al venir son tarde et pigre,
la speme incerta, e ’l desir monta et cresce,
onde e ’l lassare et l’aspettar m’incresce;
et poi al partir son più levi che tigre.

Lasso, le nevi fien tepide et nigre,
e ’l mar senz’ onda, et per l’alpe ogni pesce,
et corcherassi il sol là oltre, ond’ esce
d’un medesimo fonte Eufrate e Tigre,

prima ch’ i’ trovi in ciò pace né triegua
o Amore o Madonna altr’ uso impari,
che m’ànno congiurato a torto incontra;

et s’ i’ ò alcun dolce, è dopo tanti amari
che per disdegno il gusto si dilegua.
Altro mai di lor grazie non m’incontra.

56

If, counting all the hours with blind desire
gnawing my heart, I tell myself the truth,
then now, while I am speaking, time is passing,
the time promised to me and to my pity.

What shadow is so cruel to harm the seed
that is so close to the desired fruit?
And in my sheepfold what wild beast is roaring?
Between the grain and hand what wall exists?

Alas, I do not know, but I know well
that Love, to make my life more sorrowful,
has led me into such a joyous hope,

and now what I once read comes back to mind:
before the day we finally depart
a man cannot consider himself blest.

57

Good fortune is both slow and late in coming
(desire mounts and grows and hope's uncertain,
so waiting and forsaking both pain me),
then swifter than a tiger it departs.

Alas, the snow will fall both warm and black,
the sea waveless, the fish up in the mountains,
the sun will come to rest beyond that place
where Tigris and Euphrates share one source,

before I find in this some peace or truce,
or Love or lady find another way,
those two who plotted wrongfully against me;

when I taste sweet, it's after so much bitter,
that through my scorn the taste begins dissolving
and nothing else do I get from their graces.

58

La guancia che fu già piangendo stanca
riposate su l'un, Signor mio caro,
et siate ormai di voi stesso più avaro
a quel crudel che' suoi seguaci imbianca;

coll'altro richiudete da man manca
la strada a' messi suoi ch' indi passaro,
mostrandovi un d'agosto et di gennaro,
perch' a la lunga via tempo ne manca;

et col terzo bevete un suco d'erba
che purghe ogni pensier che 'l cor afflige,
dolce a la fine et nel principio acerba.

Me riponete ove 'l piacer si serba
tal ch' i' non tema del nocchier di Stige—
se la preghiera mia non è superba.

59

Perché quel che mi trasse ad amar prima
altrui colpa mi toglia,
del mio fermo voler già non mi svoglia.

Tra le chiome de l'or nascose il laccio
al qual mi strinse Amore,
et da' begli occhi mosse il freddo ghiaccio
che mi passò nel core
con la vertù d'un subito splendore,
che d'ogni altra sua voglia
sol rimembrando ancor l'anima spoglia.

Tolta m'è poi di que' biondi capelli,
lasso, la dolce vista,
e 'l volger de' duo lumi onesti et belli
col suo fuggir m'atrista,
ma perché ben morendo onor s'acquista,
per morte né per doglia
non vo' che da tal nodo Amor mi scioglia.

58

Your cheek which is by now weary from tears
rest upon one of these, my dearest lord;
from now on be more stingy with yourself
with that cruel one who turns his followers pale.

With the next one, block to the left the road
to messengers of his who pass that way,
and be the same in winter as in summer
for little time is left on the long road.

And with the third one drink the juice of herbs
to purge all thoughts that may afflict the heart—
sweet at the end, though the first sip is bitter.

And put me where all pleasure is reserved,
where I won't fear the captain of the Styx—
if my request is not presumptuous.

59

Although what first drew me to love is now
withdrawn not by my fault,
I'm not dissuaded from my fixed desire.

Within the locks of gold was hid the noose
with which Love bound me tight,
and from those lovely eyes came that cold ice
that went straight to my heart
with power of an unexpected splendor—
the very memory
still strips the soul of every other want.

Taken from me since then is the sweet sight,
alas, of her blond hair;
the motion of two honest, lovely eyes
in fleeing saddens me,
though through a good death one acquires honor,
in spite of grief, of death,
I won't have Love loose me from such a knot.

60

L' arbor gentil che forte amai molt'anni
(mentre i bei rami non m'ebber a sdegno)
fiorir faceva il mio debile ingegno
a la sua ombra et crescer negli affanni. 4

Poi che, securo me di tali inganni,
fece di dolce sé spietato legno,
i' rivolsi i pensier tutti ad un segno,
che parlan sempre de' lor tristi danni. 8

Che porà dir chi per amor sospira,
s' altra speranza le mie rime nove
gli avesser data et per costei la perde? 11

"Né poeta ne colga mai, né Giove
la privilegi, et al sol venga in ira
tal che si secchi ogni sua foglia verde!" 14

61

Benedetto sia 'l giorno e 'l mese et l'anno
e la stagione e 'l tempo et l'ora e 'l punto
e 'l bel paese e 'l loco ov' io fui giunto
da' duo begli occhi che legato m'ànno; 4

et benedetto il primo dolce affanno
ch' i' ebbi ad esser con Amor congiunto,
et l'arco e le saette ond' i' fui punto,
et le piaghe che 'nfin al cor mi vanno. 8

Benedette le voci tante ch' io
chiamando il nome de mia donna ò sparte,
e i sospiri et le lagrime e 'l desio; 11

et benedette sian tutte le carte
ov' io fama l'acquisto, e 'l pensier mio,
ch' è sol di lei sì ch' altra non v'à parte. 14

60

The gracious tree that I loved hard for years
while its fair branches still did not disdain me
brought all of my weak talent into bloom
within its shade to grow in all my troubles.

Then when, and I so sure of no deceit,
it turned from sweet into a bitter wood,
I turned my every thought in one direction,
and now they speak only of their sad loss.

What would he say, someone who sighs with love,
if he found my young verse had given him
another hope which he through her then loses?

"May no poet ever gather it, nor Jove
grant it favor, and let the sun pour anger,
enough to dry up all of its green leaves!"

61

Oh blessèd be the day, the month, the year,
the season and the time, the hour, the instant,
the gracious countryside, the place where I
was struck by those two lovely eyes that bound me;

and blessèd be the first sweet agony
I felt when I found myself bound to Love,
the bow and all the arrows that have pierced me,
the wounds that reach the bottom of my heart.

And blessèd be all of the poetry
I scattered, calling out my lady's name,
and all the sighs, and tears, and the desire;

blessèd be all the paper upon which
I earn her fame, and every thought of mine,
only of her, and shared with no one else.

62

Padre del Ciel, dopo i perduti giorni,
dopo le notti vaneggiando spese
con quel fero desio ch' al cor s'accese,
mirando gli atti per mio mal sì adorni, 4

piacciati omai col tuo lume ch' io torni
ad altra vita et a più belle imprese,
sì ch' avendo le reti indarno tese
il mio duro avversario se ne scorni. 8

Or volge, Signor mio, l'undecimo anno
ch' i' fui sommesso al dispietato giogo
che sopra i più soggetti è più feroce: 11

miserere del mio non degno affanno,
reduci i pensier vaghi a miglior luogo,
rammenta lor come oggi fusti in croce. 14

63

Volgendo gli occhi al mio novo colore,
che fa di morte rimembrar la gente,
pietà vi mosse; onde benignamente
salutando teneste in vita il core. 4

La fraile vita ch' ancor meco alberga
fu de' begli occhi vostri aperto dono
et de la voce angelica soave;
da lor conosco l'esser ov' io sono,
che, come suol pigro animal per verga,
così destaro in me l'anima grave. 10
Del mio cor, Donna, l'una et l'altra chiave
avete in mano, et di ciò son contento,
presto di navigare a ciascun vento:
ch' ogni cosa da voi m'è dolce onore. 14

62

Father of Heaven, after the lost days,
after the nights spent in delirium
with fierce desire burning in my heart
watching gestures so lovely to my harm,

allow me now to turn within your light
to another life, to deeds more beautiful,
so that now having spread his nets in vain
my stubborn enemy may be disarmed.

The eleventh year is turning, my dear Lord,
of my subjection to the pitiless yoke
harshest to those most subject to receive it:

have mercy on my pain that is unworthy,
lead to a better place my thoughts that wander,
remind them you were crucified today.

63

Turning your eyes and seeing my strange color
that makes a person think of death itself,
you did so out of pity, and so kindly
you greeted me and kept my heart alive.

The fragile life that still dwelt in my body
was openly the gift of your fair eyes
and of your voice angelic and so sweet;
I know that what I am I owe to them
for, as the rod will to the lazy beast,
just so they roused the heavy soul in me.
My lady in your hand you hold both keys
that fit my heart, and I am pleased by this,
ready to sail with every wind that blows,
for anything from you is a sweet honor.

64

Se voi poteste per turbati segni—
per chinar gli occhi o per piegar la testa,
o per esser più d'altra al fuggir presta,
torcendo 'l viso a' preghi onesti et degni— 4

uscir giamai, o ver per altri ingegni,
del petto ove dal primo lauro innesta
Amor più rami, i' direi ben che questa
fosse giusta cagione a' vostri sdegni; 8

ché gentil pianta in arido terreno
par che si disconvenga, et però lieta
naturalmente quindi si diparte. 11

Ma poi vostro destino a voi pur vieta
l'essere altrove, provedete almeno
di non star sempre in odiosa parte. 14

65

Lasso, che mal accorto fui da prima,
nel giorno ch' a ferir mi venne Amore!
ch' a passo a passo è poi fatto signore
de la mia vita et posto in su la cima. 4

Io non credea per forza di sua lima
che punto di fermezza o di valore
mancasse mai ne l'indurato core,
ma così va chi sopra 'l ver s'estima. 8

Da ora inanzi ogni difesa è tarda,
altra che di provar s' assai o poco
questi preghi mortali Amore sguarda. 11

Non prego già, né puote aver più loco,
che mesuratamente il mio cor arda,
ma che sua parte abbi costei del foco. 14

64

If you were able by some angry signs—
casting your eyes down, turning your head,
or fleeing faster than another would,
or frowning at my pure and worthy prayers—

ever to escape by these or other means
from out my breast where Love from that first laurel
grafts many branches, I would surely say
this is just reason to show me disdain:

a noble plant that grows in arid ground
is badly suited, and so naturally
is happy to depart from such a place.

But since your destiny prohibits you
from being somewhere else, at least be sure
the place you stay is not always so hateful.

65

Alas, badly prepared I was at first
the day on which Love came and wounded me,
who step by step then made himself the lord
over my life and sits upon its summit.

I did not think that by force of his file
a little point of strength or worthiness
would ever fail within my hardened heart,
but so it goes when one thinks he's above it.

Any defense from now on comes too late
except to test whether a lot or little
Love looks upon such mortal prayers as these.

I do not pray, nor could there be a prayer,
that now in moderation my heart burn,
but would that she had her part of this fire!

66

L'aere gravato et l'importuna nebbia
compressa intorno da rabbiosi venti
tosto conven che si converta in pioggia;
et già son quasi di cristallo i fiumi,
e 'n vece de l'erbetta per le valli
non se ved' altro che pruine et ghiaccio.

Et io nel cor via più freddo che ghiaccio
ò di gravi pensier tal una nebbia
qual si leva talor di queste valli,
serrate incontra a gli amorosi venti
et circundate di stagnanti fiumi,
quando cade dal ciel più lenta pioggia.

In picciol tempo passa ogni gran pioggia,
e 'l caldo fa sparir le nevi e 'l ghiaccio
di che vanno superbi in vista i fiumi;
né mai nascose il ciel sì folta nebbia
che sopragiunta dal furor di venti
non fuggisse dai poggi et da le valli.

Ma, lasso, a me non val fiorir di valli,
anzi piango al sereno et a la pioggia
et a' gelati et a' soavi venti;
ch' allor fia un dì Madonna senza 'l ghiaccio
dentro, et di for senza l'usata nebbia,
ch' io vedrò secco il mare e' laghi e i fiumi.

Mentre ch' al mar descenderanno i fiumi
et le fiere ameranno ombrose valli,
fia dinanzi a' begli occhi quella nebbia
che fa nascer d'i miei continua pioggia
et nel bel petto l'indurato ghiaccio
che tra' del mio sì dolorosi venti.

Ben debbo io perdonare a tutt' i venti
per amor d'un che 'n mezzo di duo fiumi
mi chiuse tra 'l bel verde e 'l dolce ghiaccio,
tal ch' i' depinsi poi per mille valli
l'ombra ov' io fui, che né calor né pioggia
né suon curava di spezzata nebbia.

66

The heavy air and the importunate fog
kept densely pressed around by furious winds
eventually must turn itself to rain;
already nearly crystal are the rivers
and in the place of grass throughout the valleys
one sees down there nothing but frost and ice.

And in my heart much colder, more than ice
my thoughts are heavy and in such a fog,
the kind that sometimes rises from these valleys,
closed all around against the loving winds
and all surrounded by stagnating rivers
when from the sky there falls the slowest rain.

In no time passes every heavy rain
and warmth makes disappear the snows and ice
which gives a proud appearance to the rivers;
the sky was never hid by such thick fog
that, meeting with the fury of the winds
it did not flee from hills and from the valleys.

But there's no help for me in blooming valleys;
I weep when it is clear and when it rains
and in the freezing and the warming winds;
the day my lady will not be like ice
inside, and outside without constant fog,
I'll see dried up the sea and lakes and rivers.

As long as to the sea descend the rivers
and beasts continue loving shady valleys,
before her lovely eyes there will be that fog
that gives rise in my own to constant rain,
and in her lovely breast the hardened ice
that draws out from my own such pain-filled winds.

I surely would put up with all the winds
for love of that one who between two rivers
closed me between fair green and the sweet ice,
so that I traced then, through a thousand valleys
where I had been, her shade; not heat or rain
concerned me nor did sound of shattered fog.

Ma non fuggio giamai nebbia per venti
come quel dì, né mai fiumi per pioggia
né ghiaccio quando 'l sole apre le valli. 39

67

Del mar tirreno a la sinistra riva
dove rotte dal vento piangon l'onde,
subito vidi quella altera fronde
di cui conven che 'n tante carte scriva. 4

Amor che dentro a l'anima bolliva
per rimembranza de le treccie bionde
mi spinse, onde in un rio che l'erba asconde
caddi, non già come persona viva. 8

Solo ov' io era tra' boschetti e' colli,
vergogna ebbi di me, ch' al cor gentile
basta ben tanto et altro spron non volli. 11

Piacemi almen d'aver cangiato stile
da gli occhi a' pie', se del lor esser molli
gli altri asciugasse un più cortese aprile. 14

But never did the fog flee from the winds
as on that day, nor rivers from the rain,
nor ice, when sunlight opens up the valleys.

67

On the left bank of the Tyrrhenian Sea
where the waves weep from wind that makes them break,
suddenly I caught sight of that proud branch
about which I must fill so many pages.

Love, that was there within my soul and boiling
in the remembrance of her golden tresses,
pushed me, and in a stream the grass was hiding
I fell, dead weight, as though I were not living.

Though all alone within the woods and hills,
I felt ashamed, and for a noble heart
this was enough—no other spur was needed.

At least I'm pleased that I have changed my style
from eyes to feet, if by their being wet
the others dry with a more gracious April.

68

L'aspetto sacro de la terra vostra
mi fa del mal passato tragger guai
gridando: "Sta' su, misero, che fai?"
et la via de salir al ciel mi mostra. 4

Ma con questo pensier un altro giostra
et dice a me: "Perché fuggendo vai?
Se ti rimembra, il tempo passa omai
di tornar a veder la donna nostra." 8

I' che 'l suo ragionar intendo, allora
m'agghiaccio dentro in guisa d'uom ch' ascolta
novelle che di subito l'accora; 11

poi torna il primo et questo dà la volta.
Qual vincerà non so, ma 'nfino ad ora
combattuto ànno et non pur una volta. 14

69

Ben sapeva io che natural consiglio,
Amor, contra di te giamai non valse,
tanti lacciuol, tante impromesse false,
tanto provato avea 'l tuo fiero artiglio. 4

Ma novamente, ond' io mi meraviglio
(dirol come persona a cui ne calse
et che 'l notai là sopra a l'acque salse
tra la riva toscana et l'Elba et Giglio), 8

i' fuggia le tue mani et per camino,
agitandom' i venti e 'l ciel et l'onde,
m'andava sconosciuto et pellegrino; 11

quando ecco i tuoi ministri, i' non so donde,
per darmi a diveder ch' al suo destino
mal chi contrasta et mal chi si nasconde. 14

68

The sacred sight I have of this your city
makes me bewail the evil of my past;
I cry: "Get up, you fool, what are you doing?"
and it shows me the way to mount to Heaven.

But with this thought another one is jousting,
and it tells me: "Why do you run away?
If you recall, the time is getting late,
we must be getting back to see our lady."

And I who understand its meaning, then,
turn cold as ice inside, like one who hears
some news that wrings his heart all of a sudden;

the first returns, and this one runs away.
I know not which will win, but up to now
they've battled and on more than one occasion.

69

How well I knew that any human means
taken against you, Love, would never work;
so many snares and unkept promises
had made me feel the fierceness of your claw.

But recently, and I am left surprised
(I'll tell it as the person who's concerned,
who took note of it while he sailed the seas
by Tuscan shores near Elba and near Giglio),

I fled your hands and went upon a journey,
that was unknown and quite unusual,
the winds and waves and heavens driving me;

when out of nowhere came your ministers
to make me see that from one's destiny
one cannot hide, one cannot fight it off.

70

Lasso me, ch' i' non so in qual parte pieghi
la speme ch' è tradita omai più volte!
Che se non è chi con pietà m'ascolte,
perché sparger al ciel sì spessi preghi?
Ma s' egli aven ch' ancor non mi si nieghi
finir anzi 'l mio fine
queste voci meschine,
non gravi al mio signor perch' io il ripreghi
di dir libero un dì tra l'erba e i fiori:
"Drez et rayson es qu' ieu ciant em demori."

Ragion è ben ch' alcuna volta io canti
però ch' ò sospirato sì gran tempo
che mai non incomincio assai per tempo
per adequar col riso i dolor tanti.
Et s' io potesse far ch' agli occhi santi
porgesse alcun diletto
qualche dolce mio detto,
o me beato sopra gli altri amanti!
Ma più quand' io dirò senza mentire:
"Donna mi priega, per ch' io voglio dire."

Vaghi pensier che così passo passo
scorto m'avete a ragionar tant' alto:
vedete che Madonna à 'l cor di smalto
sì forte ch' io per me dentro nol passo.
Ella non degna di mirar sì basso
che di nostre parole
curi, ché 'l ciel non vole,
al qual pur contrastando i' son già lasso;
onde come nel cor m'induro e 'naspro,
"Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro."

Che parlo, o dove sono, et chi m'inganna
altri ch' io stesso e 'l desiar soverchio?
Già s' i' trascorro il ciel di cerchio in cerchio
nessun pianeta a pianger mi condanna;
se mortal velo il mio veder appanna
che colpa è de le stelle
o de le cose belle?

70

Oh what to do with all that hope of mine
by now betrayed so many, many times!
Since no one offers me an ear of pity,
why cast so many prayers into the air?
But should it be that I not be denied
an end to my poor words,
before my end has come,
I beg my lord it please him let me say
again one day, free in the grass and flowers:
"It's right and just that I sing and be joyful."

There is good reason that I sing sometimes,
since for so long a time I have been sighing
that I could never start too soon to make
my smiling equal to my many woes.
If I could only make those holy eyes
receive delight somehow
from some sweet words of mine,
how blessèd would I be above all lovers!
But more so if in truth I were to say:
"A lady begs me, so I wish to speak."

My yearning thoughts, that step by step have led
my reasoning to heights unreachable,
you see my lady's heart is hard as stone,
and on my own I cannot enter it.
She does not deign to look down low enough
to care about our words;
it is not Heaven's will,
and I am weary now from opposition,
and since my heart is hard and bitter now,
"So in my speech I now wish to be harsh."

What am I saying? Where am I? Who cheats
me more than I and my excessive wants?
My mind could run the heavens sphere to sphere
and find no star condemning me to tears;
if mortal veil it is that dulls my sight,
what fault is it of stars
or any lovely thing?

Meco si sta chi dì et notte m'affanna,
poi che del suo piacer mi fe' gir grave
"La dolce vista e 'l bel guardo soave."

Tutte le cose di che 'l mondo è adorno
uscir buone de man del mastro eterno,
ma me che così a dentro non discerno
abbaglia il bel che mi si mostra intorno;
et s' al vero splendor giamai ritorno
l'occhio non po star fermo,
così l'à fatto infermo
pur la sua propria colpa, et non quel giorno
ch' i' volsi in ver l'angelica beltade
"Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade."

71

Perché la vita è breve
et l'ingegno paventa a l'alta impresa,
né di lui né di lei molto mi fido;
ma spero che sia intesa
là dov' io bramo et là dove esser deve
la doglia mia, la qual tacendo i' grido.
Occhi leggiadri dove Amor fa nido,
a voi rivolgo il mio debile stile
pigro da sé, ma 'l gran piacer lo sprona;
et chi di voi ragiona
tien dal soggetto un abito gentile
che con l'ale amorose
levando, il parte d'ogni pensier vile.
Con queste alzato vengo a dire or cose
ch' ò portate nel cor gran tempo ascose.

Non perch' io non m'aveggia
quanto mia laude è 'ngiuriosa a voi,

In me dwells one who night and day gives grief,
since she gave me the burden of the pleasure:
"Her sweet presence, her soft and lovely glance."

All things adorning our world with their beauty
came forth in goodness from the Master's hand,
but I, who cannot see so deep in her,
am dazzled by the beauty on the outside;
should I ever again see the true light,
my eyes will not resist,
so weak have they become
by their own fault and not by that day's fault
when I turned them to her angelic beauty
"In the sweet season of my early age."

71

Because life is so short
and wit so fearful of so high a venture,
I have no confidence in either one;
I hope for understanding
there where I yearn it be, where it must be,
that pain of mine which I cry out in silence.
O gracious eyes in which Love makes his nest,
to you I turn this style of mine so frail,
by nature lazy, but by great pleasure spurred;
and he who speaks of you
acquires from the subject gracious habit
which, with the wings of love
lifting him, part him from all thought that's vile;
raised by such wings, I now shall say the things
my heart has carried hidden for so long.

Not that I do not see
how much my praise falls short of honoring you,

ma contrastar non posso al gran desio
lo qual è 'n me da poi
ch' i' vidi quel che pensier non pareggia,
non che l'avagli altrui parlar o mio.
Principio del mio dolce stato rio,
altri che voi so ben che non m'intende:
quando agli ardenti rai neve divegno,
vostro gentile sdegno
forse ch' allor mia indignitate offende.
O se questa temenza
non temprasse l'arsura che m'incende,
beato venir meno! ché 'n lor presenza
m'è più caro il morir che 'l viver senza.

Dunque ch' i' non mi sfaccia
sì frale oggetto a sì possente foco,
non è proprio valor che me ne scampi;
ma la paura un poco,
che 'l sangue vago per le vene agghiaccia,
risalda 'l cor perché più tempo avampi.
O poggi, o valli, o fiumi, o selve, o campi,
o testimon de la mia grave vita,
quante volte m'udiste chiamar Morte!
Ahi dolorosa sorte,
lo star mi strugge e 'l fuggir non m'aita!
Ma se maggior paura
non m'affrenasse, via corta et spedita
trarrebbe a fin questa aspra pena et dura,
et la colpa è di tal che non à cura.

Dolor, perché mi meni
fuor di camin a dir quel ch' i' non voglio?
sostien ch' io vada ove 'l piacer mi spigne.
Già di voi non mi doglio,
occhi sopra 'l mortal corso sereni,
né di lui ch' a tal nodo mi distrigne.
Vedete ben quanti color depigne
Amor sovente in mezzo del mio volto,
et potrete pensar qual dentro fammi,
là 've dì et notte stammi
a dosso col poder ch' à in voi raccolto,
luci beate et liete

but I cannot resist the great desire
inside me since the time
that I saw what no thought can hope to equal,
let alone words, my own or any others.
Source of my sweet condition that is bitter
I know no one but you can understand:
when in your burning rays I turn to snow,
that kind disdain of yours
perhaps then my unworthiness offends.
Oh, if such fear as this
were not to temper flame that burns in me,
then, happy death! for I would in their presence
rather die happily than live without them.

That I am not destroyed,
so frail an object to so strong a fire,
is not because of my own worth that saves me;
but fear, that freezes blood
that runs through all my veins, strengthens the heart
a little so that it may burn for longer.
O hills, O vales, O streams, O woods, O fields,
O witnesses of this my heavy life,
how many times you've heard me call on Death!
Ah fate so dolorous,
staying destroys me, fleeing is no help!
But if a greater fear
did not stop me, a short and quicker way
would end this suffering, bitter and hard—
it is the fault of one who does not care.

Sorrow, why lead me off
the path to say what I would rather not?
Let me go where my pleasure urges me.
For I do not complain
about you, eyes serene beyond man's reach,
nor about him who binds me in this knot.
Take a good look at all the colors Love
will often paint right there upon my face,
then you can guess what he does inside me,
where day and night he rules
me with the force that he's gathered from you,
you holy lights and happy—

se non che 'l veder voi stesse v'è tolto,
ma quante volte a me vi rivolgete
conoscete in altrui quel che voi siete. 60

S' a voi fosse sì nota
la divina incredibile bellezza
di ch' io ragiono come a chi la mira,
misurata allegrezza
non avria 'l cor; però forse è remota
dal vigor natural che v'apre et gira. 66
Felice l'alma che per voi sospira,
lumi del ciel per li quali io ringrazio
la vita che per altro non m'è a grado.
Oimè, perché sì rado
mi date quel dond' io mai non mi sazio?
perché non più sovente
mirate qual Amor di me fa strazio,
et perché mi spogliate immantanente
del ben ch' ad ora ad or l'anima sente? 75

Dico ch' ad ora ad ora,
vostra mercede, i' sento in mezzo l'alma
una dolcezza inusitata et nova
la qual ogni altra salma
di noiosi pensier disgombra allora,
sì che di mille un sol vi si ritrova. 81
Quel tanto a me, non più, del viver giova;
et se questo mio ben durasse alquanto,
nullo stato aguagliarse al mio porrebbe.
Ma forse altrui farrebbe
invido et me superbo l'onor tanto;
però, lasso, convensi
che l'estremo del riso assaglia il pianto,
e 'nterrompendo quelli spirti accensi,
a me ritorni et di me stesso pensi. 90

L'amoroso pensero
ch' alberga dentro in voi mi si discopre
tal che mi tra' del cor ogni altra gioia;
onde parole et opre
escon di me sì fatte allor ch' i' spero
farmi immortal, perché la carne moia. 96

except that you cannot observe yourselves,
but every time you turn to look at me
you see in someone else what you are like.

Were you as well aware
of that beauty, divine, incredible
of which I speak, as is the one who sees it,
a measured happiness
your heart could not possess; perhaps, then, beauty
is separate from the natural face that moves you.
Happy the soul who sighs because of you,
celestial lights for which I thank my life
which for no other reason I find pleasant.
Ah, why do you so rarely
give me that which I never have enough of?
Why don't you look more often
at the destruction Love is causing me?
Why do you strip me without hesitation
of all the good my soul feels now and then?

I must say that sometimes,
with thanks to you, I feel within my soul
a sweetness that's unusual and new
which every other burden
of painful thoughts it then expels from there,
so of a thousand only one remains.
This bit of life and no more gives me pleasure;
and if this good of mine could last a while
no other life could ever equal it.
Perhaps it would make others
envious, and me proud from so much honor;
and so, alas, it's fated
that laughter's limits be assailed by tears,
and interrupting all those burning thoughts,
that I return to me, to think of me.

The amorous thought that dwells
inside of you reveals itself to me
and draws out of my heart all other joys;
whereby such words and deeds
come out of me that I hope to become
immortal through them though the flesh may die.

Fugge al vostro apparire angoscia et noia,
et nel vostro partir tornano insieme;
ma perché la memoria innamorata
chiude lor poi l'entrata,
di là non vanno da le parti estreme.
Onde s' alcun bel frutto
nasce di me, da voi vien prima il seme;
io per me son quasi un terreno asciutto
colto da voi, e 'l pregio è vostro in tutto.

Canzon, tu non m'acqueti, anzi m'infiammi
a dir di quel ch' a me stesso m'invola;
però sia certa de non esser sola.

72

Gentil mia Donna, i' veggio
nel mover de' vostr'occhi un dolce lume
che mi mostra la via ch' al ciel conduce;
et per lungo costume
dentro, là dove sol con Amor seggio,
quasi visibilmente il cor traluce.
Questa è la vista ch' a ben far m'induce
et che mi scorge al glorioso fine;
questa sola dal vulgo m'allontana.
Né giamai lingua umana
contar poria quel che le due divine
luci sentir mi fanno
e quando 'l verno sparge le pruine,
et quando poi ringiovenisce l'anno
qual era al tempo del mio primo affanno.

Before your presence, harm and anguish flee,
and when you leave the two of them return;
but since my memory, so much in love,
will not allow them entrance,
they get no further than the surface parts.
So if some lovely fruit
grows out of me, from you first comes the seed;
I see myself an arid piece of land
that's tilled by you—the praise all goes to you.

Song, you instead of calming make me burn
to tell about what steals me from myself;
and so be sure that you are not alone.

72

I see, my gracious lady,
when your eyes move, the sweetness of a glow
that lights the way for me that leads to Heaven;
and there, as is its custom,
within, where I sit all alone with Love,
your heart shines through—and I can almost see it.
This is the sight that leads me to do well
and shows me how to reach the goal of glory,
and this alone sets me apart from others.
There is no human tongue
that ever could explain what those divine
two lights can make me feel,
neither when winter scatters all the frost
nor later when the year grows young again
as it was at the time of my first yearning.

Io penso: se là suso,
onde 'l motor eterno de le stelle
degnò mostrar del suo lavoro in terra,
son l'altr'opre sì belle,
aprasi la pregione ov' io son chiuso
et che 'l camino a tal vita mi serra! 21
Poi mi rivolgo a la mia usata guerra,
ringraziando Natura e 'l dì ch' io nacqui
che reservato m'ànno a tanto bene,
et lei ch' a tanta spene
alzò il mio cor (ché 'nsin allor io giacqui
a me noioso et grave,
da quel dì inanzi a me medesmo piacqui),
empiendo d'un pensier alto et soave
quel core ond' ànno i begli occhi la chiave. 30

Né mai stato gioioso
Amor o la volubile Fortuna
dieder a chi più fur nel mondo amici,
ch' i' nol cangiassi ad una
rivolta d'occhi ond' ogni mio riposo
vien come ogni arbor vien da sue radici. 36
Vaghe faville angeliche, beatrici
de la mia vita, ove 'l piacer s'accende
che dolcemente mi consuma et strugge:
come sparisce et fugge
ogni altro lume dove 'l vostro splende,
così de lo mio core,
quando tanta dolcezza in lui discende,
ogni altra cosa, ogni penser va fore
et solo ivi con voi rimanse Amore. 45

Quanta dolcezza unquanco
fu in cor d'aventurosi amanti, accolta
tutta in un loco, a quel ch' i' sento è nulla,
quando voi alcuna volta
soavemente tra 'l bel nero e 'l bianco
volgete il lume in cui Amor si trastulla; 51
et credo da le fasce et da la culla
al mio imperfetto, a la fortuna avversa,
questo rimedio provedesse il cielo.

I think: if up above,
where the eternal Mover of the stars
deigned to display this work of His on earth,
there be more works so lovely,
then let the prison I am locked in open
which keeps me from the way to such a life!
Then I return to my accustomed war,
grateful to Nature and my day of birth
which have reserved for me so great a good,
and her who, to such hope,
raised up my heart (for until then I lay
heavy and hard to bear
but from then on a pleasure to myself)
filling with high and gracious thought that heart
for which those lovely eyes possess the key.

Never such happiness
did Love or ever-changing Fortune give
to those who were their closest friends in life
that I would not exchange
for one glance of those eyes where all my rest
comes from, as every tree comes from its roots.
Angelic sparks of loveliness, the blessers
of all my life, wherein flares up the pleasure
sweetly consuming and destroying me:
as every other light
will flee and fade whenever yours shines forth,
just so from my own heart,
when so much sweetness pours down into it,
all else, all of my other thoughts depart
and left there all alone with you is Love.

All sweetness ever found
in hearts of lucky lovers and collected
all in one place, is nothing next to what
I feel when you, at times,
sweetly within the lovely black and white,
make move the light in which Love takes delight.
And I believe from swaddling clothes and crib
that for my imperfection and bad fortune
this remedy the heavens have provided.

Torto mi face il velo
et la man che sì spesso s'atraversa
fra 'l mio sommo diletto
et gli occhi, onde dì et notte si rinversa
il gran desio per isfogare il petto
che forma tien dal variato aspetto.

Perch' io veggio, et mi spiace,
che natural mia dote a me non vale
né mi fa degno d'un sì caro sguardo,
sforzomi d'esser tale
qual a l'alta speranza si conface
et al foco gentil ond' io tutto ardo.
S' al ben veloce et al contrario tardo,
dispregiator di quanto 'l mondo brama
per solicito studio posso farme,
porrebbe forse aitarme
nel benigno iudicio una tal fama;
certo, il fin de' miei pianti,
che non altronde il cor doglioso chiama,
ven da' begli occhi al fin dolce tremanti,
ultima speme de' cortesi amanti.

Canzon, l'una sorella è poco inanzi
et l'altra sento in quel medesmo albergo
apparecchiarsi, ond' io più carta vergo.

Your veil does me a wrong
as does your hand that often comes between
my highest of all pleasures
and my own eyes, so night and day pours forth
my great desire to relieve my heart
which takes its shape from your own changing look.

Since I can see, with sorrow,
that all my natural gifts are not enough
to make me worthy of so dear a glance,
I force myself to be
what is becoming to so high a hope
and noble fire in which all of me burns.
If swift to good and slow to what is ill,
condemner of what all the world desires,
I could become through persevering toil,
perhaps such reputation
could help me in her kind consideration.
Surely, an end to tears
my grieving heart invokes from that place only
will come at last from fair eyes sweetly trembling,
ultimate hope of every noble lover.

Song, just behind you is one of your sisters,
and in the same place I can feel the other
getting ready, and so I rule more paper.

73

Poi che per mio destino
a dir mi sforza quell'accesa voglia
che m'à sforzato a sospirar mai sempre,
Amor, ch' a ciò m'invoglia,
sia la mia scorta e 'nsignimi 'l camino
et col desio le mie rime contempre;
ma non in guisa che lo cor si stempre
di soverchia dolcezza, com' io temo
per quel ch' i' sento ov' occhio altrui non giugne;
ché 'l dir m'infiamma et pugne
né per mi' 'ngegno (ond' io pavento et tremo)
sì come talor sòle
trovo 'l gran foco de la mente scemo,
anzi mi struggo al suon de le parole
pur com' io fusse un uom di ghiaccio al sole.

Nel cominciar credia
trovar parlando al mio ardente desire
qualche breve riposo et qualche triegua;
questa speranza ardire
mi porse a ragionar quel ch' i' sentia,
or m'abbandona al tempo et si dilegua.
Ma pur conven che l'alta impresa segua
continuando l'amorose note,
sì possente è 'l voler che mi trasporta,
et la ragione è morta
che tenea 'l freno et contrastar nol pote.
Mostrimi almen ch' io dica
Amor in guisa che, se mai percote
gli orecchi de la dolce mia nemica,
non mia ma di pietà la faccia amica.

Dico: se 'n quella etate
ch' al vero onor fur gli animi sì accesi
l'industria d'alquanti uomini s'avolse
per diversi paesi,
poggi et onde passando et l'onorate
cose cercando, e' l più bel fior ne colse;
poi che Dio et Natura et Amor volse
locar compitamente ogni virtute

73

Since it has been my fate
for my own burning wish to make me write
the wish that forced me to eternal sighing,
Love, you who makes me want this,
show me the way to go and be my guide
and keep my verse in tune with my desire,
but not so that my heart is out of tune
with sweetness overflowing, as I fear
from what I feel where no eye ever reaches;
for my words burn and urge me,
nor does my talent (whence I fear and tremble),
as oftentimes it happens,
diminish the great fire of my mind;
rather, I melt when I hear my own words,
as if I were a snowman in the sun.

When I began I thought
to find some brief repose, some kind of truce
for my inflamed desire through my words;
this hope of mine made me
daring enough to speak of what I felt,
now in my need it leaves me and dissolves.
But still I must pursue this lofty venture,
continuing to write my loving notes,
so powerful the will that transports me;
and dead is Reason now
who held the reins and cannot fight against it.
At least let Love show me
what I must say so that if by some chance
it strike the ears of my sweet enemy
it may make her, not mine, but pity's friend.

I say, if in that age
when souls burned so in search of the true honor,
the industry of some men took them round
and through the different countries
past hills and seas in search of honored things
and plucked from them their loveliest of flowers;
since it was wished by God and Love and Nature
to fill most perfectly with every virtue

in quei be' lumi ond' io gioioso vivo,
questo et quell'altro rivo
non conven ch' i' trapasse et terra mute:
a lor sempre ricorro
come a fontana d'ogni mia salute,
et quando a morte disiando corro,
sol di lor vista al mio stato soccorro.

Come a forza di venti
stanco nocchier di notte alza la testa
a' duo lumi ch' à sempre il nostro polo,
così ne la tempesta
ch' i' sostengo d'amor, gli occhi lucenti
sono il mio segno e 'l mio conforto solo.
Lasso, ma troppo è più quel ch' io ne 'nvolo
or quinci or quindi, come Amor m'informa,
che quel che ven da grazioso dono;
et quel poco ch' i' sono
mi fa di loro una perpetua norma;
poi ch' io li vidi in prima
senza lor a ben far non mossi un'orma,
così gli ò di me posti in su la cima
che 'l mio valor per sé falso s'estima.

I' non poria giamai
imaginar, non che narrar, gli effetti
che nel mio cor gli occhi soavi fanno;
tutti gli altri diletti
di questa vita ò per minori assai,
et tutte altre bellezze in dietro vanno.
Pace tranquilla senza alcuno affanno,
simile a quella ch' è nel ciel eterna,
move da lor inamorato riso;
così vedess' io fiso
come Amor dolcemente gli governa
sol un giorno da presso
senza volger giamai rota superna,
né pensasse d'altrui né di me stesso,
e 'l batter gli occhi miei non fosse spesso!

Lasso, che disiando
vo quel ch' esser non puote in alcun modo,

those lovely lights by which I live in joy,
there is no need for me
to change countries or pass from shore to shore:
to them I always go
as to the source of all of my well-being—
and when I run desirous toward death,
with their sight only do I help my state.

Just as the helmsman tired
by furious winds will lift his head at night
to those two lights that our pole always holds,
so in the storm of love
which I endure, those shining eyes of hers
are my sole comfort and my constellation.
Alas, but much more do I steal from them
now here, now there, as Love suggests I do,
than what comes from them as a gracious gift;
the little worth I have
I have from them as my perpetual norm;
from the first time I saw them
I took no step toward good without them there,
so I have placed them at my very summit,
for my own worth alone is valueless.

Never could I imagine,
and no less tell about, all the effects
those gentle eyes produce within my heart;
all of the other pleasures
found in this life I hold to be far less,
and every other beauty falls behind.
A tranquil peace without a single worry
like that which reigns eternally in Heaven
moves from their smile that holds and makes one love.
Could I but see fixedly
how Love in all his sweetness governs them
up close, for just one day,
with none of the celestial spheres in motion,
nor think of anyone nor of myself,
without blinking my eyes too frequently!

Alas, I go in search
of what can never be in any way

et vivo del desir fuor di speranza.
Solamente quel nodo
ch' Amor cerconda a la mia lingua quando
l'umana vista il troppo lume avanza
fosse disciolto, i' prenderei baldanza
di dir parole in quel punto sì nove
che farian lagrimar chi le 'ntendesse.
Ma le ferite impresse
volgon per forza il cor piagato altrove,
ond' io divento smorto
e 'l sangue si nasconde, i' non so dove,
né rimango qual era; et sommi accorto
che questo è 'l colpo di che Amor m'à morto.

Canzone, i' sento già stancar la penna
del lungo et dolce ragionar con lei,
ma non di parlar meco i pensier mei.

74

Io son già stanco di pensar sì come
i miei pensier in voi stanchi non sono
et come vita ancor non abbandono
per fuggir de' sospir sì gravi some;

et come a dir del viso et de le chiome
et de' begli occhi ond' io sempre ragiono
non è mancata omai la lingua e 'l suono,
dì et notte chiamando il vostro nome;

et che' pie' miei non son fiaccati et lassi
a seguir l'orme vostre in ogni parte,
perdendo inutilmente tanti passi;

et onde vien l'enchiostro, onde le carte
ch' i' vo empiendo di voi (se 'n ciò fallassi,
colpa d'Amor, non già defetto d'arte).

and I live in desire beyond hope.
If only the tight knot
which Love ties round my tongue on the occasion
when too much light wins over human sight
were loosened, I would gather up the courage
right then and there to speak words so unusual
they would make anyone who hears them weep.
But those wounds deeply pressed
then force my wounded heart to turn away,
and from this I turn pale,
and my blood runs to hide, I know not where,
nor am I what I was; and I'm aware
this is the blow with which Love dealt me death.

Song, I can feel my pen already tired
from talking long and sweetly by its means,
but not of all my thoughts that speak to me.

74

I am already weary of my thinking
how all my thoughts of you are never weary
and how I haven't yet abandoned life
to flee the burden of such heavy sighs;

and how, in speaking of your face and hair
and lovely eyes I always talk about,
I have not lost my tongue and voice by now
from calling out your name by day and night;

and that my feet are not worn out and tired
of following your footprints everywhere,
and wasting uselessly so many steps;

and where does all the ink come from, the paper
I fill with you—if I am wrong in this,
the fault is Love's and not the lack of art.

75

I begli occhi ond' i' fui percosso in guisa
ch' e' medesmi porian saldar la piaga,
et non già vertù d'erbe o d'arte maga
o di pietra dal mar nostro divisa, 4

m'ànno la via sì d'altro amor precisa
ch' un sol dolce penser l'anima appaga;
et se la lingua di seguirlo è vaga
la scorta po, non ella, esser derisa. 8

Questi son que' begli occhi che l'imprese
del mio signor vittoriose fanno
in ogni parte et più sovra 'l mio fianco; 11

questi son que' begli occhi che mi stanno
sempre nel cor colle faville accese,
perch' io di lor parlando non mi stanco. 14

76

Amor con sue promesse lusingando
mi ricondusse a la prigione antica,
et die' le chiavi a quella mia nemica
ch' ancor me di me stesso tene in bando. 4

Non me n'avidi, lasso, se non quando
fui in lor forza; et or con gran fatica
(chi 'l crederà, perché giurando i' 'l dica?)
in libertà ritorno sospirando; 8

et come vero prigioniero afflitto
de le catene mie gran parte porto
e 'l cor negli occhi et ne la fronte ò scritto. 11

Quando sarai del mio colore accorto
dirai: "S' i' guardo et giudico ben dritto,
questi avea poco andare ad esser morto." 14

75

The lovely eyes, that struck me in a way
so only they themselves can heal the wound
and not the force of herbs or magic art
or that of stone found far beyond our sea,

have blocked my road from any other love
and left but one sweet thought to calm the soul;
and if the tongue is fond of following it,
the guide, and not my tongue, should be derided.

These are those lovely eyes which make the banners
of my lord fly in victory everywhere
especially there over my own heart's side;

these are those lovely eyes that are alive
forever in my heart with flaming sparks,
and speaking of them never tires me.

76

Love, by alluring me with promises,
led me again into my ancient prison,
giving the keys to my own enemy
who still keeps me in exile from myself.

Alas, I did not know it, not until
they had me in their power; with great distress
(who would believe it, though I swear it's true?)
I now return to freedom with my sighs,

and like a prisoner who truly suffers
I bear most of the marks that chain me down
and in my eyes and brow my heart is signed.

As soon as you take notice of my color,
you'll say: "If what I see and judge is right,
this man has little time before he's dead."

77

Per mirar Policleto a prova fiso
con gli altri ch' ebber fama di quell'arte,
mill' anni non vedrian la minor parte
della beltà che m'àve il cor conquiso. 4

Ma certo il mio Simon fu in Paradiso
onde questa gentil donna si parte;
ivi la vide, et la ritrasse in carte
per far fede qua giù del suo bel viso. 8

L'opra fu ben di quelle che nel cielo
si ponno imaginar, non qui tra noi,
ove le membra fanno a l'alma velo; 11

cortesia fe', né la potea far poi
che fu disceso a provar caldo et gielo
et del mortal sentiron gli occhi suoi. 14

78

Quando giunse a Simon l'alto concetto
ch' a mio nome gli pose in man lo stile,
s' avesse dato a l'opera gentile
colla figura voce ed intelletto, 4

di sospir molti mi sgombrava il petto
che ciò ch' altri à più caro a me fan vile.
Però che 'n vista ella si monstra umile,
promettendomi pace ne l'aspetto, 8

ma poi ch' i' vengo a ragionar con lei,
benignamente assai par che m'ascolte:
se risponder savesse a' detti miei! 11

Pigmaliòn, quanto lodar ti dei
de l'imagine tua, se mille volte
n'avesti quel ch' i' sol una vorrei! 14

77

No matter how hard Polyclitus looked,
and all the others famous for that art,
not in a thousand years would they see even
part of the beauty that has won my heart.

For certain my friend Simon was in Heaven,
the place from which this gracious lady comes;
he saw her there and copied her on paper
as proof down here of such a lovely face.

The work is one that only up in Heaven
could be imagined, not down here with us
where body serves as veil for souls to wear—

a gracious deed that could not have been done
once he came down to feel the heat and cold
and his eyes saw their own mortality.

78

When Simon first received that high idea
which for my sake he used his drawing pen,
had he then given to his gracious work
a voice and intellect as well as form,

he would have freed my breast of many sighs
that make what others cherish vile to me,
for she appears so humble in her image
and her expression promises me peace.

And then when I begin to speak to her,
most kindly she appears to hear me speak—
if only she could answer what I say!

Pygmalion, how happy you should be
with your creation, since a thousand times
you have received what I yearn for just once!

79

S' al principio risponde il fine e 'l mezzo
del quartodecimo anno ch' io sospiro,
più non mi po scampar l'aura né 'l rezzo,
sì crescer sento 'l mio ardente desiro.

Amor, con cui pensier mai non amezzo,
sotto 'l cui giogo giamai non respiro,
tal mi governa ch' i' non son già mezzo
per gli occhi ch' al mio mal sì spesso giro.

Così mancando vo di giorno in giorno
sì chiusamente ch' i' sol me n'accorgo
et quella che guardando il cor mi strugge;

a pena infin a qui l'anima scorgo,
né so quanto fia meco il suo soggiorno,
ché la morte s'appressa e 'l viver fugge.

80

Chi è fermato di menar sua vita
su per l'onde fallaci et per li scogli,
scevro da morte con un picciol legno,
non po molto lontan esser dal fine;
però sarebbe da ritrarsi in porto
mentre al governo ancor crede la vela.

L'aura soave a cui governo et vela
commisi, entrando a l'amorosa vita
et sperando venire a miglior porto,
poi mi condusse in più di mille scogli;
et le cagion del mio doglioso fine
non pur dintorno avea, ma dentro al legno.

Chiuso gran tempo in questo cieco legno
errai senza levar occhio a la vela
ch' anzi al mio dì mi trasportava al fine;
poi piacque a lui che mi produsse in vita

79

If end and middle answer to the start
of this the fourteenth year of all my sighs,
no longer can cool shade or aura save me,
burning desire grows so strong in me.

Love, he the one with whom I'm undivided,
under whose yoke I never breathe with ease,
rules over me so that I'm less than half
from too much looking at what is my hurt.

And so from day to day I keep on failing
so secretly that I alone can see,
and she who looking at me breaks my heart.

I've hardly kept my soul with me till now
nor do I know how long it plans to stay,
for my life flees as death comes ever closer.

80

He who made up his mind to lead a life
upon deceiving waves and near the rocks
detached from death and in a little bark,
cannot be very far from his own end;
he would do well now to return to port
while still his tiller can control the sail.

The gentle aura to whom tiller and sail
I gave on entering this amorous life
with hope of coming to a better port,
then led me to more than a thousand rocks;
the reason for so sorrowful an end
were less the things outside than in the bark.

Closed in so long a time in this blind bark
I wandered never looking at the sail
that was taking me early to my end;
and then it pleased the one who gave me life

chiamarme tanto indietro da li scogli
ch' almen da lunge m'apparisse il porto.

Come lume di notte in alcun porto
vide mai d'alto mar nave né legno,
se non gliel tolse o tempestate o scogli,
così di su la gonfiata vela
vid' io le 'nsegne di quell'altra vita;
et allor sospirai verso 'l mio fine.

Non perch' io sia securo ancor del fine,
ché volendo col giorno esser a porto
è gran viaggio in così poca vita;
poi temo, che mi veggio in fraile legno
et più non vorrei piena la vela
del vento che mi pinse in questi scogli.

S' io esca vivo de' dubbiosi scogli
et arrive il mio esilio ad un bel fine,
ch' i' sarei vago di voltar la vela
et l'àncore gittar in qualche porto!
Se non ch' i' ardo come acceso legno,
sì m' è duro a lassar l'usata vita.

Signor de la mia fine et de la vita:
prima ch' i' fiacchi il legno tra li scogli
drizza a buon porto l'affannata vela.

to call me back a distance from the rocks,
at least enough, though far, to see the port.

Just as a light at nighttime in some port
is seen from the high sea by boat or bark,
if not obscured by tempest or by rocks,
with equal joy above the swollen sail
I saw the ensigns of that other life;
then with desire I sighed for my end.

And not because I'm sure yet of the end,
for, wishing with the daylight to reach port,
the trip is long for such a little life;
and I'm afraid, for fragile is my bark,
and more than I would wish I see the sail
full of the wind that drove me to these rocks.

May I survive from all these perilous rocks
and may my exile come to a good end;
how glad I would be then to turn the sail
and cast the anchor somewhere in a port!
But I am burning now like kindled bark,
so hard it is to change my way of life.

Lord of my end and my entire life:
before my bark is shattered on the rocks,
direct to a good port my weary sail.

81

Io son sì stanco sotto 'l fascio antico
de le mie colpe et de l'usanza ria,
ch' i' temo forte di mancar tra via
et di cader in man del mio nemico. 4

Ben venne a dilivrarmi un grande amico
per somma et ineffabil cortesia;
poi volò fuor de la veduta mia
sì ch' a mirarlo indarno m'affatico. 8

Ma la sua voce ancor qua giù rimbomba:
"O voi che travagliate, ecco 'l camino;
venite a me, se 'l passo altri non serra." 11

Qual grazia, qual amore, o qual destino
mi darà penne in guisa di colomba,
ch' i' mi riposi et levimi da terra? 14

82

Io non fu' d'amar voi lassato unquanco,
Madonna, né sarò mentre ch' io viva;
ma d'odiar me medesmo giunto a riva
et del continuo lagrimar so' stanco, 4

et voglio anzi un sepolcro bello et bianco
che 'l vostro nome a mio danno si scriva
in alcun marmo ove di spirto priva
sia la mia carne, che po star seco anco. 8

Però s' un cor pien d'amorosa fede
può contentarve senza farne strazio,
piacciavi omai di questo aver mercede; 11

se 'n altro modo cerca d'esser sazio
vostro sdegno, erra, et non fia quel che crede;
di che Amor et me stesso assai ringrazio. 14

81

I am so weary under the old bundle
of all my sins as well as my bad habit
that I fear much to fail along the way
and fall into the hands of my great foe.

I know a mighty friend once came to free me
in His ineffable and highest kindness,
but then He flew beyond my mortal vision
so that I strive to see Him, but in vain.

But His voice still resounds down here:
"O you who labor, look, here is the path;
now come to me, if no one blocks the way."

What grace, what love, and what predestination
will give me wings to fly, like those of doves,
that I may rest and raise myself from earth?

82

Of loving you I am not tired, never,
my lady, not as long as I'm alive;
but I am at the end of my self-hate
and I am weary from my endless tears,

and I would rather have a blank, white tombstone
than that your name be written to my loss
upon some slab of marble, when my spirit
is free of flesh, which still has time to stay.

So if a heart that's full of faithful love
can make you glad, without your breaking it,
then let it please you now to show it mercy;

if in some other way your disdain seeks
to fill itself, it errs, and won't succeed;
for this I give great thanks to Love and me.

83

Se bianche non son prima ambe le tempie
ch' a poco a poco par che 'l tempo mischi,
securo non sarò ben ch' io m'arrischi
talor ov' Amor l'arco tira et empie. 4

Non temo già che più mi strazi o scempie,
né mi ritenga perch' ancor m'invischi,
né m'apra il cor perché di fuor l'incischi
con sue saette velenose et empie. 8

Lagrime omai dagli occhi uscir non ponno,
ma di gire infin là sanno il viaggio
sì ch' a pena fia mai chi 'l passo chiuda; 11

ben mi po riscaldare il fiero raggio,
non sì ch' i' arda, et può turbarmi il sonno,
ma romper no, l'imagine aspra et cruda. 14

84

"Occhi, piangete, accompagnate il core
che di vostro fallir morte sostene."—
"Così sempre facciamo, et ne convene
lamentar più l'altrui che 'l nostro errore."— 4

"Già prima ebbe per voi l'entrata Amore
là onde ancor come in suo albergo vene."—
"Noi gli aprimmo la via per quella spene
che mosse dentro da colui che more."— 8

"Non son, come a voi par, le ragion pari,
ché pur voi foste ne la prima vista
del vostro et del suo mal cotanto avari."— 11

"Or questo è quel che più ch' altro n'atrista:
che' perfetti giudicii son sì rari,
et d'altrui colpa altrui biasmo s'acquista." 14

83

As long as both my temples are not white,
which now little by little time is streaking,
I won't be safe, though I may take a chance
sometimes where Love loads up and draws his bow.

I fear no longer he will maim or kill me
nor hold me, though he has me in his lime,
nor break my heart, though he still pierce its surface
with all his arrows pitiless and poisoned.

No longer can the tears escape my heart,
though they may know the way to get that far
and barely can the pass be blocked to them,

the fierce ray certainly can give me warmth
but not so that I burn; the cruel, harsh image
can still disturb my sleep but never break it.

84

"Eyes, come now, weep, accompany the heart
which has to suffer death because of you."
"We do this all the time, and we must weep
more for another's fault than for our own."

"It was through you that Love first found the entrance
where he still comes as if to his own home."
"We showed him in because of all that hope
that stirred within the one who now is dying."

"The claims are not, as you would think, both equal,
for it was you who were in your first sight
most greedy for your own harm and for his."

"Now this is what makes us, above all, sad:
that judgments that are perfect are so rare,
and for another's fault another's blamed."

85

Io amai sempre, et amo forte ancora,
et son per amar più di giorno in giorno
quel dolce loco ove piangendo torno
spesse fiate quando Amor m'accora;

et son fermo d'amare il tempo et l'ora
ch' ogni vil cura mi levar dintorno,
et più colei lo cui bel viso adorno
di ben far co' suoi esempli m'innamora.

Ma chi pensò veder mai tutti insieme
per assalirmi il core, or quindi or quinci,
questi dolci nemici ch' i' tant' amo?

Amor, con quanto sforzo oggi mi vinci!
et se non ch' al desio cresce la speme,
i' cadrei morto ove più viver bramo.

86

Io avrò sempre in odio la fenestra
onde Amor m'aventò già mille strali
perch' alquanti di lor non fur mortali:
ch' è bel morir mentre la vita è destra,

ma 'l sovrastar ne la pregion terrestra
cagion m'è, lasso, d'infiniti mali,
et più mi duol che fien meco immortali
poi che l'alma dal cor non si scapestra.

Misera, che devrebbe esser accorta
per lunga esperienza omai che 'l tempo
non è chi 'ndietro volga o chi l'affreni!

Più volte l'ò con ta' parole scorta:
"Vattene, trista, che non va per tempo
chi dopo lassa i suoi dì più sereni ."

85

I always loved and still I love with passion
and I'm for loving more from day to day
that place so sweet, where weeping I return
so many times when Love saddens my heart;

and I am fixed in love of day and hour
that took all lowly cares away from me,
and more of her whose lovely face makes me
in love with doing well through her example.

Whoever thought to see them all together
as they assail my heart from every side,
all these sweet enemies I love so much?

Love, with what force you vanquish me today!
And were it not that hope grows with desire,
I would drop dead where I most yearn to live.

86

Forever more I shall detest the window
from where Love shot at me thousands of arrows
for none of them has struck a mortal blow;
death would be lovely while life goes so well.

But staying longer in my earthly prison
is cause, alas, of all my endless woes,
and I grieve more that they will be immortal
since soul from heart cannot be disentangled.

Poor soul who should have been aware by now
through long experience that there is no one
can turn back time or slow it down from running!

So many times I've warned her with these words:
"Leave now, sad soul, for he does not go early
who leaves behind his happiest of days."

87

Sì tosto come aven che l'arco scocchi,
buon sagittario di lontan discerne
qual colpo è da sprezzare et qual d'averne
fede ch' al destinato segno tocchi;

similemente il colpo de' vostr'occhi,
Donna, sentiste a le mie parti interne
dritto passare, onde conven ch' eterne
lagrime per la piaga il cor trabocchi;

et certo son che voi diceste allora:
"Misero amante! a che vaghezza il mena?
Ecco lo strale onde Amor vol ch' e' mora."

Ora, veggendo come 'l duol m'affrena,
quel che mi fanno i miei nemici ancora
non è per morte ma per più mia pena.

88

Poi che mia spene è lunga a venir troppo
et de la vita il trapassar sì corto,
vorreimi a miglior tempo esser accorto
per fuggir dietro più che di galoppo;

et fuggo ancor così debile et zoppo
da l'un de' lati ove 'l desio mi à storto,
securo omai; ma pur nel viso porto
segni ch' io presi a l'amoroso intoppo.

Ond' io consiglio: "Voi che siete in via,
volgete i passi, et voi ch' Amore avampa,
non v'indugiate su l'estremo ardore,

"ché perch' io viva, de mille un no scampa.
Era ben forte la nemica mia,
et lei vid' io ferita in mezzo 'l core."

87

As soon as he has let the bowstring go
an expert archer from afar can see
which shot goes wrong and which he may have faith
will strike the target it was destined for;

in like fashion, lady, you felt the shot
pass from your eyes straight into my insides
wherefore my heart is forced to overflow
from out the wound with its eternal tears,

and I am sure that at the time you said:
"Poor lover! Where does his desire take him?
This is the dart with which Love claims his death."

Considering now how grief has me in check,
what my two enemies still do to me
is not to kill me but increase my pain.

88

Since what I hope for takes too long to come
and what is left of life is very short,
I wish I had been wiser earlier
and backed away much faster than a gallop;

but now I do flee though I'm weak and lame
on the side where desire has twisted me;
I'm safe now, but I still bear on my face
the scars I got while fighting in Love's war.

So, I advise: "All you upon Love's way,
turn back your steps, and you who burn with Love,
do not wait till your flame burns to extremes;

"though I live, not one in a thousand makes it.
And certainly my enemy was strong,
for she I saw wounded straight through the heart."

89

Fuggendo la pregione ove Amor m'ebbe
molt'anni a far di me quel ch' a lui parve,
Donne mie, lungo fora ricontarve
quanto la nova libertà m'increbbe. 4

Diceami il cor che per sé non saprebbe
viver un giorno, et poi tra via m'apparve
quel traditore in sì mentite larve
che più saggio di me ingannato avrebbe. 8

Onde più volte sospirando indietro
dissi: "Oimè, il giogo et le catene e i ceppi
eran più dolci che l'andare sciolto!" 11

Misero me, che tardo il mio mal seppi,
et con quanta fatica oggi mi spetro
de l'errore ov' io stesso m'era involto. 14

90

Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi
che 'n mille dolci nodi gli avolgea,
e 'l vago lume oltra misura ardea
di quei begli occhi, ch' or ne son sì scarsi; 4

e 'l viso di pietosi color farsi
(non so se vero o falso) mi parea:
i' che l'esca amorosa al petto avea,
qual meraviglia se di subito arsi? 8

Non era l'andar suo cosa mortale
ma d'angelica forma, et le parole
sonavan altro che pur voce umana: 11

uno spirto celeste, un vivo sole
fu quel ch' i' vidi, et se non fosse or tale,
piaga per allentar d'arco non sana. 14

89

Escaping from the prison where Love kept me
while doing what he liked with me for years,
would take too long to tell about, my ladies,
how much my new-found liberty displeased me.

My heart was saying that it could not live
another day alone when there appeared
along the way that traitor so disguised
he could have fooled a wiser man than I.

Then sighing many times for what was past
I said: "Oh my, the yoke, the chains, the shackles
were sweeter than my living free like this!"

Poor me who understood my harm so late!
How hard it is today to free myself
from error that I wrapped my own self in!

90

She'd let her gold hair flow free in the breeze
that whirled it into thousands of sweet knots,
and lovely light would burn beyond all measure
in those fair eyes whose light is dimmer now.

Her face would turn the color pity wears,
a pity true or false I did not know,
and I with all Love's tinder in my breast—
it's no surprise I quickly caught on fire.

The way she walked was not the way of mortals
but of angelic forms, and when she spoke
more than an earthly voice it was that sang:

a godly spirit and a living sun
was what I saw, and if she is not now,
my wound still bleeds, although the bow's unbent.

91

La bella donna che cotanto amavi
subitamente s'è da noi partita
et, per quel ch' io ne speri, al ciel salita,
sì furon gli atti suoi dolci soavi. 4

Tempo è da ricovrare ambe la chiavi
del tuo cor ch' ella possedeva in vita
et seguir lei per via dritta espedita:
peso terren non sia più che t'aggravi. 8

Poi che se' sgombro de la maggior salma,
l'altre puoi giuso agevolmente porre,
sallendo quasi un pellegrino scarco; 11

ben vedi omai sì come a morte corre
ogni cosa creata, et quanto a l'alma
bisogna ir lieve al periglioso varco. 14

92

Piangete, Donne, et con voi pianga Amore,
piangete, amanti, per ciascun paese
poi ch' è morto colui che tutto intese
in farvi, mentre visse al mondo, onore. 4

Io per me prego il mio acerbo dolore
non sian da lui le lagrime contese
et mi sia di sospir tanto cortese
quanto bisogna a disfogare il core. 8

Piangan le rime ancor, piangano i versi,
perché 'l nostro amoroso messer Cino
novellamente s'è da noi partito. 11

Pianga Pistoia e i cittadin perversi
che perduto ànno sì dolce vicino,
et rallegresi il cielo ov' ello è gito. 14

91

The lovely lady whom you loved so much
has suddenly departed from our midst
and, as I hope is true, has gone to Heaven,
so sweet, so gentle were all of her deeds.

It's time now to recover both the keys
that worked your heart which she possessed in life,
to follow her along a straight, clear path;
let earthly weight no longer hold you down.

Since you are lightened of your greatest burden,
you easily can put down all the others
and rise up as a weightless pilgrim would.

You clearly see now how all things created
run toward their death and just how light the soul
must be to make it through the dangerous pass.

92

Now weep, ladies, and with you let Love weep;
let every lover weep in every land
for he is dead, that one whose mind was fixed
on honoring you while he still lived on earth.

As for myself, I pray my own cruel sorrow
not be the cause of stopping up my tears,
and be so courteous to let me sigh
enough so that my heart may be unburdened.

Let poetry weep too, let every verse,
because our very loving messer Cino
has just now gone and left us all alone.

Pistoia, weep, and all her wicked folk
for having lost a neighbor sweet as he,
and Heaven, celebrate, where he has gone.

93

Più volte Amor m'avea già detto: "Scrivi,
scrivi quel che vedesti in lettre d'oro,
sì come i miei seguaci discoloro
e 'n un momento gli fo morti et vivi. 4

"Un tempo fu che 'n te stesso 'l sentivi,
volgare esempio a l'amoroso coro;
poi di man mi ti tolse altro lavoro,
ma già ti raggiuns' io mentre fuggivi, 8

"et se' begli occhi ond' io me ti mostrai,
et là dove era il mio dolce ridutto
quando ti ruppi al cor tanta durezza, 11

"mi rendon l'arco ch' ogni cosa spezza,
forse non avrai sempre il viso asciutto:
ch' i' mi pasco di lagrime, et tu 'l sai." 14

94

Quando giugne per gli occhi al cor profondo
l'imagin donna, ogni altra indi si parte,
et le vertù che l'anima comparte
lascian le membra quasi immobil pondo; 4

et del primo miracolo il secondo
nasce talor, che la scacciata parte
da se stessa fuggendo arriva in parte
che fa vendetta e 'l suo esilio giocondo; 8

quinci in duo volti un color morto appare,
perché 'l vigor che vivi gli mostrava
da nessun lato è più là dove stava. 11

Et di questo in quel dì mi ricordava
ch' i' vidi duo amanti trasformare
et far qual io mi soglio in vista fare. 14

93

Many a time has Love said to me: “Write,
write down in golden letters what you’ve seen,
how I change those who follow me in color
and in an instant make them live and die.

“There was a time when you felt this yourself,
famous example to all those who love;
then other work took you out of my hands,
but I caught up with you while you were fleeing,

“and if those lovely eyes you saw me in—
that place which was for me a docile fortress
when I broke all the hardness of your heart—

“give back to me my bow that shatters all,
perhaps your cheeks will not always be dry;
you know quite well how I can feed on tears.”

94

When through my eyes to my heart’s depths there comes
the master image, all the rest depart
and all the powers that the soul distributes
leave all the body’s members like dead weight;

from this first miracle a second one
sometimes is born: the part that’s driven out
in fleeing from itself reaches a place
that makes both vengeance and its exile joy;

so in two faces one dead color shows,
for all the power that showed they were alive
no longer is where it was at the start.

And this came to my mind the day on which
I saw two lovers in such transformation,
faces becoming what mine often does.

95

Così potess' io ben chiudere in versi
i miei pensier come nel cor gli chiudo,
ch' animo al mondo non fu mai sì crudo
ch' i' non facessi per pietà dolersi. 4

Ma voi, occhi beati, ond' io soffersi
quel colpo ove non valse elmo né scudo,
di for et dentro mi vedete ignudo
ben che 'n lamenti il duol non si riversi. 8

Poi che vostro veder in me risplende
come raggio di sol traluce in vetro,
basti dunque il desio senza ch' io dica. 11

Lasso, non a Maria, non nocque a Pietro
la fede ch' a me sol tanto è nemica!
et so ch' altri che voi, nessun m'intende. 14

96

Io son de l'aspettar omai sì vinto
et de la lunga guerra de' sospiri,
ch' i' aggio in odio la speme e i desiri
et ogni laccio onde 'l mio cor è avinto. 4

Ma 'l bel viso leggiadro che depinto
porto nel petto et veggio ove ch' io miri
mi sforza, onde ne' primi empi martiri
pur son contra mia voglia risospinto. 8

Allor errai quando l'antica strada
di libertà mi fu precisa et tolta,
ché mal si segue ciò ch' agli occhi agrada; 11

allor corse al suo mal libera et sciolta,
ora a posta d'altrui conven che vada
l'anima che peccò sol una volta. 14

95

If only I could close as well in verse
as I enclose within my heart my thoughts,
there is no soul so cruel in all the world
that I could not make grieve for me with pity.

But you, O blessèd eyes, from whom I suffered
that blow no helm or shield could have availed me,
you see me naked inside and without,
although my pain does not pour out in cries.

Since your eyes' sight shines splendidly through me,
the way a ray of sunlight shines through glass,
let my desire without words suffice.

Alas, Mary or Peter were not harmed
by faithfulness to me alone so hostile!
I know no one but you can undertand.

96

I am so tired now of all this waiting
and of the battle I wage with my sighs
that I hate hope and hate what I desire
and every noose with which my heart is bound.

But that fair, charming face that I bear painted
inside of me and I see everywhere
compels me, and into those first cruel tortures
I'm driven back no less against my will.

I first went wrong when I found my old road
of freedom was cut off and blocked to me—
it's bad to follow what the eyes find pleasing—

then it ran free and unbound to its harm,
now it is forced to do another's pleasure,
that soul of mine that sinned but only once.

97

Ahi bella libertà, come tu m'ài,
partendoti da me, mostrato quale
era 'l mio stato quando il primo strale
fece la piaga ond' io non guerrò mai!

Gli occhi invaghiro allor sì de' lor guai
che 'l fren de la ragione ivi non vale,
perch' ànno a schifo ogni opera mortale—
lasso, così da prima gli avezzai!

Né mi lece ascoltar chi non ragiona
de la mia morte, et solo del suo nome
vo empiendo l'aere che sì dolce sona;

Amor in altra parte non mi sprona,
né i pie' sanno altra via, né le man come
lodar si possa in carte altra persona.

98

Orso, al vostro destrier si po ben porre
un fren che di suo corso indietro il volga,
ma 'l cor chi legherà che non si sciolga
se brama onore e 'l suo contrario aborre?

Non sospirate: a lui non si po torre
suo pregio perch' a voi l'andar si tolga,
ché come fama publica divolga
egli è già là che null'altro il precorre.

Basti che si ritrove in mezzo 'l campo
al destinato dì sotto quell'arme
che gli dà il tempo, amor, vertute e 'l sangue,

gridando: "D'un gentil desire avampo
col signor mio, che non po seguitarme
et del non esser qui si strugge et langue."

97

Ah, lovely liberty, how you have shown me
by your departure from me what my state
was like at that time when the first of arrows
gave me the wound that never will be cured.

My eyes then fell in love so with their woes
that reason's rein no longer is of use
because they find all mortal works repugnant—
alas, so did I spoil them at the start!

Nor can I hear someone who does not speak
about my death, and only with her name
so sweetly sounding do I fill the air.

Love does not spur me in other directions,
no other road my feet know, nor my hands
how they could praise on paper someone else.

98

Orso, your charger can be fit with reins
with which to turn him back along his course,
but who can bind a heart that can't get loose
if it seeks honor and hates the opposite?

Don't sigh, no one can take away from it
its worth, though you yourself are stopped from going,
because, as everyone already knows
it is already there—no one was quicker.

Enough to know it will be on the field
on the appointed day under those arms
which time and love, valor and blood give it,

shouting: "I am aflame with noble wishes,
one with my lord, who cannot follow me
and suffers and is sick he can't be here."

99

Poi che voi et io più volte abbiam provato
come 'l nostro sperar torna fallace,
dietro a quel sommo ben che mai non spiace
levate il core a più felice stato. 4

Questa vita terrena è quasi un prato
che 'l serpente tra' fiori et l'erba giace,
et s' alcuna sua vista agli occhi piace
è per lassar più l'animo invescato. 8

Voi dunque, se cercate aver la mente
anzi l'estremo dì queta giamai,
seguite i pochi et non la volgar gente. 11

Ben si può dire a me: "Frate, tu vai
mostrando altrui la via dove sovente
fosti smarrito et or se' più che mai." 14

100

Quella fenestra ove l'un sol si vede
quando a lui piace et l'altro in su la nona,
et quella dove l'aere freddo suona
ne' brevi giorni quando Borrea 'l fiede, 4

e 'l sasso ove a' gran dì pensosa siede
Madonna et sola seco si ragiona,
con quanti luoghi sua bella persona
coprì mai d'ombra o disegnò col piede, 8

e 'l fiero passo ove m'agiunse Amore,
et la nova stagion che d'anno in anno
mi rinfresca in quel dì l'antiche piaghe, 11

e 'l volto et le parole che mi stanno
altamente confitte in mezzo 'l core,
fanno le luci mie di pianger vaghe. 14

99

Since you and I have many times been witness
to how our hopes have turned out to be false,
pursuing highest good that never fails,
raise up your heart unto that happier state.

This earthly life of ours is like a meadow
where in the grass and flowers lies the serpent,
and if our eyes find something pleasing there,
it's there to keep the soul more tangled up.

So you, then, if you seek to ever have
a quiet mind before the final day,
follow the few and not the common crowd.

One could well say to me: "Brother, you keep
showing others the way along which often
you've lost yourself and still are, more than ever."

100

That window where at any time it likes
one sun is seen, the other one at noon;
and that one where the cold air makes its sound
in those short days when Boreas blows through;

the stone where on long days my lady sits
in thought and talking to herself alone,
and all those places her fair body ever
covered in shade or left trace of her feet;

and the fierce pass where Love caught up to me,
and the new season which from year to year
renews my ancient wounds on that same day;

also the face and all those words of hers
are fixed deep in the middle of my heart—
all of these things make my eyes long to weep.

101

Lasso, ben so che dolorose prede
di noi fa quella ch' a null'uom perdona
et che rapidamente n'abandona
il mondo et picciol tempo ne tien fede;

veggio a molto languir poca mercede,
et già l'ultimo dì nel cor mi tuona;
per tutto questo Amor non mi spregiona,
che l'usato tributo agli occhi chiede.

So come i dì, come i momenti et l'ore
ne portan gli anni, et non ricevo inganno
ma forze assai maggior che d'arti maghe.

La voglia et la ragion combattuto ànno
sette et sette anni, et vincerà il migliore,
s' anime son qua giù del ben presaghe.

102

Cesare, poi che 'l traditor d'Egitto
li fece il don de l'onorata testa,
celando l'allegrezza manifesta
pianse per gli occhi fuor, sì come è scritto;

et Anibàl, quando a l'imperio afflitto
vide farsi Fortuna sì molesta,
rise fra gente lagrimosa et mesta
per isfogare il suo acerbo despitto;

et così aven che l'animo ciascuna
sua passion sotto 'l contrario manto
ricopre co la vista or chiara or bruna.

Però s' alcuna volta io rido o canto,
facciol perch' i' non ò se non quest'una
via da celare il mio angoscioso pianto.

101

Alas, how well I know that she who pardons
no man makes all of us her anguished prey
and that the world quickly abandons us
and for the briefest time keeps faith with us;

I see little reward for all the languishing,
and in my heart the last day thunders now;
in spite of this Love will not set me free,
demanding of my eyes the usual tribute.

I know how days, minutes, and hours carry off
the years; I'm not deceived, I'm visited
by forces greater than the magic arts.

Passion and reason have waged war for seven
and seven years, and the better one will win,
if souls down here can see the good to come.

102

Caesar, the time that the Egyptian traitor
gave him the gift of that great, honored head,
hiding the joy he clearly felt inside,
wept outwardly with tears, as it is written;

and Hannibal, when he saw Fortune show
such cruelty against the beaten realm,
laughed loud among his sad and tearful people
to vent the bitter disdain that he felt;

and so it happens that a soul will cover
with face that's sometimes clear or sometimes dark
its passion with a cloak that is different.

So if at any time I laugh or sing,
I do so for I have no other way
but this of hiding all my anguished tears.

103

Vinse Anibàl, et non seppe usar poi
ben la vittoriosa sua ventura;
però, Signor mio caro, aggiate cura
che similmente non avegna a voi. 4

L'orsa, rabbiosa per gli orsacchi suoi
che trovaron di maggio aspra pastura,
rode sé dentro, e i denti et l'unghie endura
per vendicar suoi danni sopra noi. 8

Mentre 'l novo dolor dunque l'accora
non riponete l'onorata spada,
anzi seguite là dove vi chiama 11

vostra fortuna, dritto per la strada
che vi può dar dopo la morte ancora
mille et mille anni al mondo onor et fama. 14

104

L'aspettata vertù che 'n voi fioriva
quando Amor cominciò darvi bataglia
produce or frutto che quel fiore aguaglia
et che mia speme fa venire a riva. 4

Però mi dice il cor ch' io in carte scriva
cosa onde 'l vostro nome in pregio saglia,
che 'n nulla parte sì saldo s'intaglia
per far di marmo una persona viva. 8

Credete voi che Cesare o Marcello
o Paolo od African fossin cotali
per incude giamai né per martello? 11

Pandolfo mio, quest'opere son frali
al lungo andar, ma 'l nostro studio è quello
che fa per fama gli uomini immortali. 14

103

Hannibal won, but then did not know how
to make good use of his victorious fortune;
therefore, dear Lord of mine, take care
that the same thing does not happen to you.

The bear, in rage over those cubs of hers
who found the harvest bitter when May came,
gnaws at herself and hardens teeth and claws
to take revenge on us for all her harms.

While recent sorrow still weighs down on her,
do not allow your honored sword to rest,
but rather follow straight to where your fortune

is calling to you, straight along the road
that still can give you, even after death,
thousands of years of honor and fame on earth.

104

The hoped-for virtue flowering in you
when Love started a war against you then,
now gives fruit that is worthy of the flower
and makes all of the hope I have come true.

So my heart tells me now to write on paper
some things to make your name far greater still,
for in no way can sculpture be so solid
as to give life to someone out of stone.

Do you believe that Caesar or Marcellus,
Paulus or Africanus became so great
because of someone's anvil or a hammer?

O my Pandolfo, works like those are frail
in the long run, while our work is the one
that gives men immortality through fame.

105

Mai non vo' più cantar com' io soleva,
ch' altri no m'intendeva, ond' ebbi scorno,
et puossi in bel soggiorno esser molesto.
Il sempre sospirar nulla releva.
Già su per l'alpi neva d'ogn' intorno;
et è già presso al giorno, ond' io son desto.
Un atto dolce onesto è gentil cosa;
et in donna amorosa ancor m'aggrada
che 'n vista vada altera et disdegnosa,
non superba et ritrosa.
Amor regge suo imperio senza spada.
Chi smarrita à la strada, torni indietro;
chi non à albergo, posisi in sul verde;
chi non à l'auro o 'l perde,
spenga la sete sua con un bel vetro.

I' die' in guarda a san Pietro, or non più, no,
intendami chi po, ch' i' m'intend' io.
Grave soma è un mal fio a mantenerlo.
Quanto posso mi spetro et sol mi sto.
Fetonte odo che 'n Po cadde et morio,
et già di là dal rio passato è 'l merlo.
Deh venite a vederlo, or i' non voglio,
non è gioco uno scoglio in mezzo l'onde
e 'ntra le fronde il visco. Assai mi doglio
quando un soverchio orgoglio
molte vertuti in bella donna asconde.
Alcun è che risponde a chi nol chiama;
altri chi 'l prega si dilegua et fugge,
altri al ghiaccio si strugge,
altri dì et notte la sua morte brama.

Proverbio "Ama chi t'ama" è fatto antico;
i' so ben quel ch' io dico, or lass' andare,
ché conven ch' altri impare a le sue spese.
Un' umil donna grama un dolce amico.
Mal si conosce il fico; a me pur pare
senno a non cominciar tropp' alte imprese,
et per ogni paese è bona stanza.
L'infinita speranza occide altrui,

105

I never want to sing the way I used to,
for no one understood me—I was scorned,
and in a lovely place one can be sad.
To sigh continuously is of no help.
It is snowing all around up in the mountains,
and day is getting close, so I'm awake.
A sweet and honest act is something noble;
yet I am pleased to see a loving lady
who looks as though she's lofty and disdainful,
but not stubborn and proud.
Love rules over his realm without a sword.
He who has lost his way let him turn back;
who does not have a home, sleep on the grass;
who has no gold or lost it,
let him now quench his thirst from a nice glass.

I trusted in Saint Peter, but no longer,
if you can understand the way I do.
Bad tribute is a heavy weight to bear.
I get free as I can and stay alone.
I hear Phaeton fell in the Po and died,
the blackbird has already crossed the river.
Come see it for yourself, now I don't want to;
a rock amid the waves is not a joke,
nor birdlime in the leaves. It grieves me much
when an excessive pride
hides many virtues in a lovely lady.
Some answer when no one has called to them;
some flee and vanish from the one who begs them,
and some melt from the ice,
some yearn for their own death both night and day.

The proverb "Love who loves you" is out of style;
I know well what I say, so that is that,
for everyone must learn at his own cost.
A humble lady makes a sweet friend grieve.
A fig is hard to judge; I also think
it's wise not to do things that are too hard;
and every country has good dwelling places.
A hope that never ends can kill someone;

et anch' io fui alcuna volta in danza.
Quel poco che m'avanza
fia chi nol schifi s' i' 'l vo' dare a lui.
I' mi fido in colui che 'l mondo regge
et ch' e' seguaci suoi nel bosco alberga
che con pietosa verga
mi meni a passo omai tra le sue gregge.

Forse ch' ogni uom che legge non s'intende,
et la rete tal tende che non piglia;
et chi troppo assottiglia si scavezza.
Non sia zoppa la legge ov' altri attende.
Per bene star si scende molte miglia.
Tal par gran meraviglia et poi si sprezza;
una chiusa bellezza è più soave.
Benedetta la chiave che s'avvolse
al cor et sciolse l'alma et scossa l'àve
di catena sì grave
e 'nfiniti sospir del mio sen tolse.
Là dove più mi dolse altri si dole,
et dolendo adolcisce il mio dolore,
ond' io ringrazio Amore,
che più no 'l sento et è non men che suole.

In silenzio parole accorte et sagge
è 'l suon che mi sottragge ogni altra cura,
et la pregione oscura ov' è 'l bel lume;
le notturne viole per le piagge,
et le fere selvagge entr'a le mura,
et la dolce paura, e 'l bel costume,
et di duo fonti un fiume in pace vòlto
dov' io bramo, et raccolto ove che sia;
amor et gelosia m'ànno il cor tolto,
e i segni del bel volto
che mi conducon per più piana via
a la speranza mia, al fin degli affanni.
O riposto mio bene et quel che segue,
or pace or guerra or triegue,
mai non m'abbandonate in questi panni.

De' passati miei danni piango et rido
perché molto mi fido in quel ch' i' odo;

I too have joined the dance on some occasions.
That little left to me
will please the one I choose to give it to.
I place my faith in Him who rules the world
and shelters in the woods all those who follow,
that with his staff of mercy
he lead me step by step now to his flock.

Perhaps all those who read don't understand;
who sets the net not always gets the catch,
and he who is too subtle breaks his head.
Let not the law be lame when others wait.
To feel good one descends for many miles.
Something seems wonderful, then is despised;
a hidden beauty is the sweetest thing.
And blessèd be the key that in my heart
was turned, and freed my soul and shook it from
the chains that were so heavy
and let loose from my breast those endless sighs.
There where I grieved the most another grieves,
and grieving makes my grief still sweeter now;
and so with thanks to Love
I feel no more, yet it's no less than ever.

In silence, like those words skillful and wise,
is sound that takes all other cares from me,
and the dark prison with its lovely light;
nocturnal violets all along the shore,
and the wild animals inside the walls,
the sweet timidity and lovely habits,
and from two fountains one stream turned to peace
to where I want it gathered where it is;
and love and jealousy all took my heart,
the stars of that fair face,
all lead me on along a smoother way
toward my hope, the end of all my troubles.
O hidden good of mine, and that which follows,
now peace, now war, now truce,
don't ever leave me while I wear these clothes.

I weep for my past sins and also smile
because of all my faith in what I hear;

del presente mi godo et meglio aspetto,
et vo contando gli anni, et taccio et grido.
E 'n bel ramo m'annido et in tal modo
ch' i' ne ringrazio et lodo il gran disdetto
che l'indurato affetto al fine à vinto,
et ne l'alma depinto: "I' sare' udito
e mostratone a dito," et ànne estinto
(tanto innanzi son pinto
ch' i' 'l pur dirò): "Non fostu tant' ardito,"
chi m'à 'l fianco ferito et chi 'l risalda,
per cui nel cor via più che 'n carta scrivo,
chi mi fa morto et vivo,
chi 'n un punto m'agghiaccia et mi riscalda.

106

Nova angeletta sovra l'ale accorta
scese dal cielo in su la fresca riva
là 'nd' io passava sol per mio destino.

Poi che senza compagna et senza scorta
mi vide, un laccio che di seta ordiva
tese fra l'erba ond' è verde il camino.

Allor fui preso, et non mi spiacque poi,
sì dolce lume uscia degli occhi suoi.

the present I enjoy and wait for better;
I count the years, I'm silent and cry out.
I nest on a good branch in such a way
I'm thankful and I praise the great refusal
that vanquished finally the base affect
and on my soul engraved: "I would be heard of
and pointed out for it," and erased from it
(I'm pushed so far ahead
that I can say it): "You weren't bold enough"—
she who has wounded me and heals my side,
for whom I write in heart more than on paper,
who makes me die and live,
who at the same time makes me freeze and burn.

106

A marvelous little angel with quick wings
descended from the heavens to the fresh shore
where fate would have it I walked all alone.

When she saw me with no friend and no guide,
a trap that she had woven out of silk
she set within the grass that greened my path.

Then I was caught, and I was not unhappy—
the sweetest light came spreading from her eyes.

107

Non veggio ove scampar mi possa omai;
sì lunga guerra i begli occhi mi fanno
ch' i' temo, lasso, no 'l soverchio affanno
distrugga 'l cor che triegua non à mai. 4

Fuggir vorrei, ma gli amorosi rai
che dì et notte ne la mente stanno
risplendon sì ch' al quintodecimo anno
m'abbaglian più che 'l primo giorno assai, 8

et l'imagine lor son sì cosparte
che volver non mi posso ov' io non veggia
o quella o simil indi accesa luce. 11

Solo d'un lauro tal selva verdeggia
che 'l mio avversario con mirabil arte
vago fra i rami ovunque vuol m'adduce. 14

108

Aventuroso più d'altro terreno,
ov' Amor vidi già fermar le piante
ver me volgendo quelle luci sante
che fanno intorno a sé l'aere sereno: 4

prima poria per tempo venir meno
un'imagine salda di diamante
che l'atto dolce non mi stia davante
del qual ò la memoria e 'l cor sì pieno; 8

né tante volte ti vedrò giamai
ch' i' non m'inchini a ricercar de l'orme
che 'l bel pie' fece in quel cortese giro. 11

Ma se 'n cor valoroso Amor non dorme,
prega Sennuccio mio, quando 'l vedrai,
di qualche lagrimetta o d'un sospiro. 14

107

No longer do I see a way to flee:
those lovely eyes have fought me for so long
that I fear, oh my God, excessive torture
will break my heart that never has known peace.

I'd run away, but all those loving rays
that night and day stay fixed inside my mind
shine with such light that in my fifteenth year
I'm dazzled more than the first day they struck,

and images of them are so widespread
that I can turn nowhere without beholding
that very light or like light lit from it.

From just one laurel tree such forests flourish,
so that my foe with his amazing skill
can lead me through the branches where he pleases.

108

More fortunate than any other ground,
the place I once saw Love stop in her steps
and turn toward me those holy lights of hers
that turn the air around her to clear peace:

a statue that was cut from solid diamond
would wear away with time before the sight
of her sweet bearing disappeared from me—
so much it fills my heart and memory;

though I shall see you many times again,
not once will I not bend to seek the print
her lovely foot made turning graciously.

If in a noble heart Love never sleeps,
then beg of my Sennuccio when you see him
for a little tear or two, or for a sigh.

109

Lasso, quante fiate Amor m'assale
che fra la notte e 'l dì son più di mille
torno dov' arder vidi le faville
che 'l foco del mio cor fanno immortale. 4

Ivi m'acqueto, et son condotto a tale
ch' a nona, a vespro, a l'alba et a le squille
le trovo nel pensier tanto tranquille
che di null'altro mi rimembra o cale. 8

L'aura soave che dal chiaro viso
move col suon de le parole accorte
per far dolce sereno ovunque spira, 11

quasi un spirto gentil di paradiso
sempre in quell'aere par che mi conforte,
sì che 'l cor lasso altrove non respira. 14

110

Persequendomi Amor al luogo usato,
ristretto in guisa d'uom ch' aspetta guerra,
che si provede e i passi intorno serra,
de' miei antichi pensier mi stava armato; 4

volsimi et vidi un'ombra che da lato
stampava il sole, et riconobbi in terra
quella che, se 'l giudicio mio non erra,
era più degna d'immortale stato. 8

I' dicea fra mio cor: "Perché paventi?"
ma non fu prima dentro il penser giunto
che i raggi ov' io mi struggo eran presenti; 11

come col balenar tona in un punto,
così fu' io de' begli occhi lucenti
et d'un dolce saluto inseme aggiunto. 14

109

Alas, whenever Love besieges me
(more than a thousand times through day and night)
I turn to where I saw those burning sparks
that make the fire in my heart immortal.

Therein I calm myself and have become
such that at noon, vespers, dawn, and at bell time
I find them in my thought so tranquil there,
I think of nothing else nor do I care.

The gentle aura that from her splendid face
moves with the sound of those wise words of hers
to bring sweet weather every place it breathes,

as if it were a breath from paradise
forever in that air, seems to comfort me,
and so my weary heart breathes nowhere else.

110

With Love pursuing me to that same place,
I, cautious, as a man expecting war
prepares himself and closes all the passes,
was there and armed with all of my old thoughts;

I turned and saw a shadow by my side
stamped by the sun, and I knew from the ground
that it was she (if judgment does not fail)
who was more worthy of a godly state.

I said inside my heart: "What do you fear?"
No sooner had the thought come to my mind
than were those rays that melt me present there:

as lightning comes with thunder both at once,
so I by lovely eyes that shone, was struck
together with the sound of her sweet greeting.

111

La donna che 'l mio cor nel viso porta,
là dove sol fra bei pensier d'amore
sedea, m'apparve, e io per farle onore
mossi con fronte reverente et smorta. 4

Tosto che del mio stato fussi accorta,
a me si volse in sì novo colore
ch' avrebbe a Giove nel maggior furore
tolto l'arme di mano et l'ira morta. 8

I' mi riscossi, et ella oltra parlando
passò, ché la parola i' non soffersi
né 'l dolce sfavillar de gli occhi suoi. 11

Or mi ritrovo pien di sì diversi
piaceri, in quel saluto ripensando,
che duol non sento né senti' ma' poi. 14

112

Sennuccio, i' vo' che sapi in qual manera
trattato sono et qual vita è la mia:
ardomi et struggo ancor com' io solia,
l'aura mi volve et son pur quel ch' i' m'era. 4

Qui tutta umile et qui la vidi altera,
or aspra or piana, or dispietata or pia,
or vestirsi onestate or leggiadria,
or mansueta or disdegnosa et fera. 8

Qui cantò dolcemente, et qui s'assise,
qui si rivolse, et qui rattenne il passo,
qui co' begli occhi mi trafisse il core, 11

qui disse una parola, et qui sorrise,
qui cangiò il viso. In questi pensier, lasso,
notte et dì tiemmi il signor nostro Amore. 14

111

The lady who in her eyes bears my heart
appeared to me where I sat all alone
in lovely thoughts of love; to pay her honor
I moved, and my face was pale and reverent.

As soon as she saw me in such condition
she turned to me with color so astounding
it would have made Jove in his greatest fury
drop all his arms and kill his very wrath.

And I was trembling as she spoke and passed
me by, for I could not endure her words
nor all the sparkling sweetness of those eyes.

Now I am full of such extraordinary
pleasure when reconsidering her greeting,
I feel no pain and have not since that time.

112

Sennuccio, I want you to know the way
I'm treated and the kind of life I lead:
I burn and suffer as I always have,
caught in the aura, I'm still just what I was.

All humble here, and there I see her haughty,
now harsh then kind, now cruel then merciful,
now clothed in virtue, then lightheartedness,
and now docile, and then fierce and disdainful.

With sweetness she sang here, and here she sat,
here she turned round, and here held back her steps,
here with her lovely eyes she pierced my heart,

here she pronounced a word and here she smiled,
and here she changed expression. In thoughts like these,
alas, our lord Love keeps me day and night.

113

Qui dove mezzo son, Sennuccio mio
(così ci foss' io intero et voi contento),
venni fuggendo la tempesta e 'l vento
ch' ànno subito fatto il tempo rio.

Qui son securo, et vo' vi dir perch' io
non come soglio il folgorar pavento
et perché mitigato, non che spento,
né mica trovo il mio ardente desio.

Tosto che giunto a l'amorosa reggia
vidi onde nacque l'aura dolce et pura
ch' acqueta l'aere et mette i tuoni in bando,

Amor ne l'alma ov' ella signoreggia
raccese 'l foco et spense la paura:
che farrei dunque gli occhi suoi guardando?

114

De l'empia Babilonia ond' è fuggita
ogni vergogna, ond' ogni bene è fori,
albergo di dolor, madre d'errori,
son fuggito io per allungar la vita.

Qui mi sto solo, et come Amor m'invita
or rime et versi, or colgo erbette et fiori,
seco parlando et a tempi migliori
sempre pensando, et questo sol m'aita.

Né del vulgo mi cal, né di Fortuna,
né di me molto, né di cosa vile,
né dentro sento né di fuor gran caldo;

sol due persone cheggio, et vorrei l'una
col cor ver me pacificato umile,
l'altro col pie', sì come mai fu, saldo.

113

Here where there's only half of me, Sennuccio
(would that I were all here, and you were happy!),
I came fleeing the tempest and the storm
which suddenly have made the weather bad.

Here I am safe and want to tell you why
I do not fear the lightning as I did
and why I do not find my burning wish
lessened the slightest, not to say extinguished.

Soon as I reached the realm of Love and saw
the birthplace of that aura sweet and pure
that calms the air and banishes the thunder,

Love, in my soul where she is in command,
relit the fire and put out the fear.
Imagine had I looked into her eyes!

114

From wicked Babylon, from which has fled
all sense of shame, from which all good is gone,
the home of sorrow, mother of all wrong,
I've fled in order to prolong my life.

Here I'm alone, and at Love's invitation
collect now rhymes and verse, now herbs and flowers,
talking to him, and always thinking of
those better days, and only this can help me.

I've no concern for Fortune or the masses,
or much for my own self or all base things,
nor do I feel much heat inside or out.

I want two persons only: one I wish
with heart at peace and humble toward me,
the other with a foot more firm than ever.

115

In mezzo di duo amanti onesta altera
vidi una donna et quel signor co lei
che fra gli uomini regna et fra li dei;
et da l'un lato il sole, io da l'altro era.

Poi che s'accorse chiusa da la spera
de l'amico più bello, a gli occhi miei
tutta lieta si volse, et ben vorrei
che mai non fosse in ver di me più fera.

Subito in allegrezza si converse
la gelosia che 'n su la prima vista
per sì alto avversario al cor mi nacque;

a lui la faccia lagrimosa et trista
un nuviletto intorno ricoverse,
cotanto l'esser vinto li dispiacque.

116

Pien di quella ineffabile dolcezza
che del bel viso trassen gli occhi miei
nel dì che volentier chiusi gli avrei
per non mirar giamai minor bellezza,

lassai quel ch' i' più bramo; et ò sì avezza
la mente a contemplar sola costei
ch' altro non vede, et ciò che non è lei
già per antica usanza odia et disprezza.

In una valle chiusa d'ogn' intorno,
ch' è refrigerio de' sospir miei lassi,
giunsi sol con Amor, pensoso et tardo;

ivi non donne ma fontane et sassi
et l'imagine trovo di quel giorno
che 'l pensier mio figura ovunque io sguardo.

115

Between two lovers I could see a lady,
honest and proud, and with her was that lord
who rules over mankind and all the gods;
on one side was the sun, I on the other.

When she saw herself closed in by the sphere
of her more handsome friend, she turned all happy
and looked into my eyes—how much I'd like her
never to be hostile toward me again.

Then suddenly there turned to happiness
the jealousy that at first sight was born
within my heart for such an adversary;

around his face so tearful and so sad
there formed a little cloud that covered it,
so much was he displeased at having lost.

116

Full of that sweetness indescribable
that my eyes drew from such a lovely face
the day on which I gladly would have closed them
to never look again at lesser beauty,

I left what I want most; and so accustomed
my mind is to the thought of her alone
that it sees nothing else—what is not she
out of old habit it still hates and scorns.

Into a valley closed on every side,
a place of comfort for my weary sighs,
I came alone with Love, thoughtful and late;

I found no ladies there, just springs and rocks
together with the picture of that day
which my thoughts draw no matter where I look.

117

Se 'l sasso ond' è più chiusa questa valle
(di che 'l suo proprio nome si deriva)
tenesse vòlto per natura schiva
a Roma il viso et a Babèl le spalle,

i miei sospiri più benigno calle
avrian per gire ove lor spene è viva;
or vanno sparsi, et pur ciascuno arriva
là dov' io il mando, ché sol un non falle;

et son di là sì dolcemente accolti,
com' io m'accorgo, che nessun mai torna,
con tal diletto in quelle parti stanno.

De gli occhi è 'l duol, che tosto che s'aggiorna
per gran desio de' be' luoghi a lor tolti
dànno a me pianto et a' pie' lassi affanno.

118

Rimansi a dietro il sestodecimo anno
de' miei sospiri, et io trapasso inanzi
verso l'estremo; et parmi che pur dianzi
fosse 'l principio di cotanto affanno.

L'amar m'è dolce, et util il mio danno,
e 'l viver grave; et prego che gli avanzi
l'empia fortuna; et temo no chiuda anzi
Morte i begli occhi che parlar mi fanno.

Or qui son, lasso, et voglio esser altrove,
et vorrei più volere, et più non voglio,
et per più non poter fo quant' io posso;

et d'antichi desir lagrime nove
provan com' io son pur quel ch' i' mi soglio,
né per mille rivolte ancor son mosso.

117

If the mountain closing in this valley most,
from which derives the very name it has,
had its face turned by natural disgust
in Rome's direction and its back to Babel,

then all my sighs would find a kinder road
to travel to that place where their hope lives;
now they go scattered, yet each one arrives
where I send him—there is not one that fails;

with so much sweetness they are welcomed there,
as far as I can see, that none return—
they are delighted to be in those parts.

The pain comes from my eyes who, come the dawn,
wish for the lovely places taken from them
and make me weep and my feet weak from climbing.

118

And now behind me is the sixteenth year
of all my sighs and I am moving forward
toward the last, and yet it seems to me
that all this suffering has just begun.

The bitter's sweet and all my losses useful,
my living hard; I pray that life outlast
cruel fortune, and I fear that Death before then
may close the lovely eyes that make me speak.

I'm here, alas, and wish that I were elsewhere,
and wish that I wished more but wish no more,
and unable to do more, do all I can;

and new tears shed from old desires show
that I am still what I have always been,
not through a thousand turnings have I moved.

119

Una donna più bella assai che 'l sole
et più lucente et d'altrettanta etade
con famosa beltade
acerbo ancor mi trasse a la sua schiera.
Questa in penseri in opre et in parole,
però ch' è de le cose al mondo rade,
questa per mille strade
sempre inanzi mi fu leggiadra altera. 8
Solo per lei tornai da quel ch' i' era;
poi ch' i' soffersi gli occhi suoi da presso
per suo amor m'er' io messo
a faticosa impresa assai per tempo,
tal che s' i' arrivo al disiato porto
spero per lei gran tempo
viver, quand' altri mi terrà per morto. 15

Questa mia donna mi menò molt'anni
pien di vaghezza giovenile ardendo,
sì come ora io comprendo,
sol per aver di me più certa prova,
mostrandomi pur l'ombra o 'l velo o' panni
talor di sé, ma 'l viso nascondendo;
et io, lasso, credendo
vederne assai, tutta l'età mia nova 23
passai contento, e 'l rimembrar mi giova
poi ch' alquanto di lei veggi' or più inanzi.
I' dico che pur dianzi
qual io non l'avea vista infin allora
mi si scoverse, onde mi nacque un ghiaccio
nel core, et evvi ancora,
et sarà sempre, fin ch' i' le sia in braccio. 30

Ma non me 'l tolse la paura o 'l gelo
che pur tanta baldanze al mio cor diedi
ch' i' le mi strinsi a' piedi
per più dolcezza trar de gli occhi suoi;
et ella, che remosso avea già il velo
dinanzi a' miei, mi disse: "Amico, or vedi
com' io son bella, et chiedi
quanto par si convenga agli anni tuoi." 38

119

A lady far more lovely than the sun,
more brilliant than he is and just as old
with beauty world-renowned,
drew me at early age to join her ranks.
She, in my thoughts, my work, and in my words,
as one of those rare things in the world,
along a thousand roads
was always there to lead me proud and lovely.
For her alone I turned from what I was;
once able to look straight into her eyes,
for love of her I put
myself to doing hard work very early,
so if I reach the port of my desire
I hope through her to live
long after people think that I am dead.

This lady led me on for many years
full of the burning of my youthful passion,
as I now understand,
only to have more certain proof from me,
revealing just a shadow, veil, or garment
of her true self, keeping her face well hidden;
and I, alas, believing
to have seen much, all of my youthful years
I spent content—the memory makes me happy
now that I see a little more of her;
that is, just recently
she showed herself to me, such as I'd never
seen her before, and so born in my heart
was ice that is still there
and will be always till I'm in her arms.

But still the fear and chill did not prevent
my giving so much courage to my heart
that I embraced her feet
in order to draw from her eyes more sweetness;
and she who had by now removed the veil
before my eyes said: "Friend, now you can see
how fair I am, and ask
whatever is befitting to your years."

"Madonna," dissi, "già gran tempo in voi
posi 'l mio amor ch' i' sento or sì infiammato,
ond' a me in questo stato
altro volere o disvoler m'è tolto."
Con voce allor di sì mirabil tempre
rispose, et con un volto
che temer et sperar mi farà sempre:

"Rado fu al mondo fra così gran turba
ch' udendo ragionar del mio valore
non si sentisse al core
per breve tempo almen qualche favilla;
"ma l' avversaria mia che 'l ben perturba
tosto la spegne, ond' ogni vertù more
et regna altro signore
che promette una vita più tranquilla.
"De la tua mente Amor, che prima aprilla,
mi dice cose veramente ond' io
veggio che 'l gran desio
pur d'onorato fin ti farà degno;
et come già se' de' miei rari amici,
donna vedrai per segno
che farà gli occhi tuoi via più felici."

I' volea dir: "Quest' è impossibil cosa,"
quand' ella: "Or mira (et leva gli occhi un poco
in più riposto loco)
donna ch' a pochi si mostrò giamai."
Ratto inchinai la fronte vergognosa,
sentendo novo dentro maggior foco,
et ella il prese in gioco,
dicendo: "I' veggio ben dove tu stai;
"sì come 'l sol con suoi possenti rai
fa subito sparire ogni altra stella,
così par or men bella
la vista mia cui maggior luce preme.
Ma io però da' miei non ti diparto
ché questa et me d'un seme,
lei davanti et me poi, produsse un parto."

Ruppesi intanto di vergogna il nodo
ch' a la mia lingua era distretto intorno

"My lady," I said, "I've placed my love in you
for so long now, it burns so, I can feel it,
and so in such a state,
I cannot wish or unwish anything."
Then with a voice so marvelous in tone
and with a look that will
forever make me fear and hope she answered:

"Rare in this world of such great throngs
are those who having heard of my true worth
have not felt in their hearts
for a short time at least some sparks for me:
but then my enemy who disturbs good
soon puts them out, and so all virtue dies
and another ruler reigns
who promises a life that is more tranquil.
About your mind Love, who first opened it,
tells me such things that I
can see your great desire
will make you worthy of an honored goal;
and since you are one of my rare friends now,
as test you'll see a lady
who'll make your eyes more fortunate by far."

I almost said, "This is not possible,"
when she said: "Look now, raise your eyes a little,
to that more hidden place,
to a lady who has shown herself to few."
Immediately I bent my head in shame,
feeling a new and greater flame inside me,
and she made light of this,
saying: "I see quite clearly where you stand.
Just as the sun by means of its strong rays
makes every other star vanish from sight,
so now I seem less lovely
to one who's overcome by greater light.
But I do not exclude you from my friends,
for she and I—she first,
then I—were products of one seed, one birth."

With that the knot of all my shame was broken
that had been tightly wound around my tongue

su nel primiero scorno,
allor quand' io del suo accorger m'accorsi,
e 'ncominciai: "S' egli è ver quel ch' i' odo,
beato il padre et benedetto il giorno
ch' à di voi il mondo adorno
et tutto 'l tempo ch' a vedervi io corsi!
"Et se mai da la via dritta mi torsi
duolmene forte assai più ch' i' non mostro;
ma se de l'esser vostro
fossi degno udir più, del desir ardo."
Pensosa mi rispose et così fiso
tenne il suo dolce sguardo
ch' al cor mandò co le parole il viso:

"Sì come piacque al nostro eterno padre,
ciascuna di noi due nacque immortale.
Miseri, a voi che vale?
Me' v'era che da noi fosse il defetto.
"Amate, belle, gioveni, et leggiadre
fummo alcun tempo; et or siam giunte a tale
che costei batte l'ale
per tornar a l'antico suo ricetto;
"i' per me sono un'ombra. Et or t'ò detto
quanto per te sì breve intender puossi."
Poi che i pie' suoi fur mossi,
dicendo: "Non temer ch' i' mi allontani,"
di verde lauro una ghirlanda colse,
la qual co le sue mani
intorno intorno a le mie tempie avolse.

Canzon, chi tua ragion chiamasse oscura,
di': "Non ò cura, perché tosto spero
ch' altro messaggio il vero
farà in più chiara voce manifesto;
i' venni sol per isvegliare altrui,
se chi m'impose questo
non m'ingannò quand' io parti' da lui."

at the first sense of scorn,
when I took notice that she noticed me,
and I began: "If what I hear is true,
blessèd the father and blessèd the day
that have adorned the world with you
and all the times I ran to see you there!
And if I ever strayed from the straight path,
it pains me greatly, much more than I show;
but if I should be worthy
to know more what you're like, I burn to know."
Then full of thought she answered, and she held
her gaze so fixed on me
that to my heart she sent her face with words:

"Just as it pleased our everlasting father,
the two of us were born to be immortal.
What good did it do you?
Better for you had we possessed the defect.
Beloved and lovely, young and full of charm
we were at one time; now we've reached the point
that this one beats her wings
in order to return to her old home.
I on my own am shadow. And now I've told you
as much as you can understand in brief."
And as she moved to go
saying: "Don't be afraid that I am going,"
she gathered up a garland of green laurel
which with her own two hands
she started winding round and round my temples.

My song, to those who call your words obscure
say: "I don't care, because I'm hoping soon
another messenger
with clearer voice will clarify the truth;
I came only to wake up other men,
if he who ordered this
did not deceive me when I left his presence."

120

Quelle pietose rime in ch' io m'accorsi
di vostro ingegno e del cortese affetto,
ebben tanto vigor nel mio conspetto
che ratto a questa penna la man porsi, 4

per far voi certo che gli estremi morsi
di quella ch' io con tutto 'l mondo aspetto
mai non senti', ma pur senza sospetto
infin a l'uscio del suo albergo corsi; 8

poi tornai indietro, perch' io vidi scritto
di sopra 'l limitar che 'l tempo ancora
non era giunto al mio viver prescritto, 11

ben ch' io non vi legessi il dì né l'ora.
Dunque s'acqueti omai 'l cor vostro afflitto,
et cerchi uom degno quando sì l'onora. 14

121

Or vedi, Amor, che giovenetta donna
tuo regno sprezza et del mio mal non cura,
et tra duo ta' nemici è sì secura. 3

Tu se' armato, et ella in treccie e 'n gonna
si siede et scalza in mezzo i fiori et l'erba,
ver me spietata, e 'ncontr' a te superba. 6

I' son pregion, ma se pietà ancor serba
l'arco tuo saldo, et qualcuna saetta,
fa di te et di me, signor, vendetta. 9

120

Those rhymes of pity which made me aware
of all your talent and your kind affection
had so much power when I took them in
that quickly I picked up this pen to write

and reassure you that those final bites
from her whom I and all the world awaits
I've not yet felt, though I did without fear
once rush up to the threshold of her home;

then I came back, because I saw engraved
above it that the limit of the time
prescribed for me to live had not yet come,

although I could not read the day or hour.
And so now calm your heart that is afflicted
and find a man worthy to be so honored.

121

Now, Love, just look how that young lady there
disdains your rule and cares not for my harm
and so securely sits between two foes.

You wear your armor, she in braids and dress
sits barefoot there among the grass and flowers,
hardhearted against me and proud toward you.

I am a prisoner, but if some mercy
still keeps your bow intact, with a few arrows,
take vengeance for yourself and me, my Lord.

122

Dicesette anni à già rivolto il cielo
poi che 'mprima arsi, et giamai non mi spensi;
quando aven ch' al mio stato ripensi,
sento nel mezzo de le fiamme un gelo. 4

Vero è 'l proverbio ch' altri cangia il pelo
anzi che 'l vezzo, et per lentar i sensi
gli umani affetti non son meno intensi;
ciò ne fa l'ombra ria del grave velo. 8

Oi me, lasso! e quando fia quel giorno
che mirando il fuggir de gli anni miei
esca del foco et di sì lunghe pene? 11

Vedrò mai il dì che pur quant' io vorrei
quell'aria dolce del bel viso adorno
piaccia a quest'occhi, et quanto si convene? 14

123

Quel vago impallidir, che 'l dolce riso
d'un'amorosa nebbia ricoperse,
con tanta maiestade al cor s'offerse
che li si fece incontr' a mezzo 'l viso. 4

Conobbi allor sì come in paradiso
vede l'un l'altro; in tal guisa s'aperse
quel pietoso penser ch' altri non scerse,
ma vidil io, ch' altrove non m'affiso. 8

Ogni angelica vista, ogni atto umile
che giamai in donna ov' amor fosse apparve,
fora uno sdegno a lato a quel ch' io dico. 11

Chinava a terra il bel guardo gentile
et tacendo dicea, come a me parve:
"Chi m'allontana il mio fedele amico?" 14

122

Seventeen years the heavens have revolved
since I first burned with fire that rages still;
when I think of the state that I am in
I feel a chill within those flames of mine.

How true the saying is: we lose our hair
before our habits, and though senses slacken
the human passions are no less intense—
the bitter shadow of our heavy veil.

Ah grief! how long before I see the day
when, gazing at the flight my years have taken,
I step out of my grievous trial by fire?

Will that day ever come when the sweet air
about her lovely visage please these eyes
no more than I would wish, and than is fitting?

123

That charming paling of the face which covered
her smile of sweetness with the mist of love
so nobly was presented to my heart
that he went up to meet it on my face.

I understood then how in Paradise
one sees another—the way that thought of mercy
revealed itself no other could perceive,
but I saw it, for I look nowhere else.

Every angelic look, all humble gestures
appearing in a lady where love dwells
would be like scorn compared to what I speak of.

She bent to earth her lovely, gracious glance,
and in her silence said, it seemed to me:
"Who takes away from me my faithful friend?"

124

Amor, Fortuna, et la mia mente, schiva
di quel che vede et nel passato volta,
m'affliggon sì ch' io porto alcuna volta
invidia a quei che son su l'altra riva. 4

Amor mi strugge 'l cor, Fortuna il priva
d'ogni conforto, onde la mente stolta
s'adira et piange; et così in pena molta
sempre conven che combattendo viva. 8

Né spero i dolci dì tornino indietro,
ma pur di male in peggio quel ch' avanza,
et di mio corso ò già passato 'l mezzo. 11

Lasso, non di diamante ma d'un vetro
veggio di man cadermi ogni speranza
et tutt' i miei pensier romper nel mezzo. 14

125

Se 'l pensier che mi strugge
com' è pungente et saldo
così vestisse d'un color conforme,
forse tal m'arde et fugge
ch' avria parte del caldo
et desteriasi Amor là dov' or dorme; 6
men solitarie l'orme
foran de' miei pie' lassi
per campagne et per colli,
men gli occhi ad ogn'or molli,
ardendo lei che come un ghiaccio stassi
et non lascia in me dramma
che non sia foco et fiamma. 13

Però ch' Amor mi sforza
et di saver mi spoglia,
parlo in rime aspre et di dolcezza ignude;
ma non sempre a la scorza

124

Fortune and love, and my own mind, which shuns
what it sees now and turns back to the past,
afflict me so that there are times I feel
envy for those who've reached the other shore.

While Love wears out my heart, Fortune deprives it
of any comfort, and my foolish mind
gets angry and it weeps—so in great pain
forever I must live and fight this way.

Nor can I hope the sweet days will return,
I see what's left me go from bad to worse,
and I've already run half of my course.

Alas, not made of diamond but of glass
all of my hope I see slip from my hands
and every thought of mine split down the middle.

125

If this thought paining me,
as it is sharp and constant,
were clothed in the right color,
perhaps that one who burns me
and flees would feel some heat,
and Love would be awakened where he sleeps;
then less alone would be
my weary footprints left
through fields and over hills,
my eyes always less wet,
if she would burn who stands there now like ice
and leaves in me no trace
that is not flame and fire.

Since Love is forcing me
but strips me of my skill,
my verse is harsh and naked of all sweetness;
not always on the outside

ramo né in fior né 'n foglia
mostra di for sua natural vertude. 19
Miri ciò che 'l cor chiude
Amor et que' begli occhi
ove si siede a l'ombra.
Se 'l dolor che si sgombra
aven che 'n pianto o in lamentar trabocchi,
l'un a me noce, et l'altro
altrui, ch' io non lo scaltro. 26

Dolci rime leggiadre
che nel primiero assalto
d'Amor usai quand' io non ebbi altr' arme:
chi verrà mai che squadre
questo mio cor di smalto,
ch' almen com' io solea possa sfogarme? 32
ch' aver dentro a lui parme
un che Madonna sempre
depinge et de lei parla;
a voler poi ritrarla
per me non basto et par ch' io me ne stempre:
lasso, così m'è scorso
lo mio dolce soccorso. 39

Come fanciul ch' a pena
volge la lingua et snoda,
che dir non sa ma 'l più tacer gli è noia,
così 'l desir mi mena
a dire, et vo' che m'oda
la dolce mia nemica anzi ch' io moia. 45
Se forse ogni sua gioia
nel suo bel viso è solo
et di tutt' altro è schiva,
odil tu, verde riva,
e presta a' miei sospir sì largo volo
che sempre si ridica
come tu m'eri amica. 52

Ben sai che sì bel piede
non toccò terra unquanco
come quel dì che già segnata fosti,
onde 'l cor lasso riede

does branch or leaf or flower
reveal the natural goodness it contains.
Let those fair eyes and Love
who sits beneath their shade
see what my heart encloses.
If grief that is unburdened
should overflow in tears or in laments,
the one pains me, the other
another, for it is crude.

O sweet and graceful verse
that in my first assault
on Love I used—I had no other arms—
will someone come and break
this heart of mine that's stone
so I can vent my feelings as I used to?
There seems inside him one
who always paints my lady
and talks about her there;
to describe her on my own
I cannot do, so I become untuned;
alas, and so has fled
that sweet comfort of mine.

Just as a child that hardly
can get his tongue untied,
who cannot speak but hates not speaking more,
so my desire leads me
to speak, and I want her,
my own sweet foe, to hear me before I die.
But if all of her joy
is in her face alone
and cares for nothing else,
then you, green shore, must listen
and lend to my laments so wide a flight
that it can be recalled
how good a friend you were.

You know a foot so lovely
has never touched the earth
as on that day when you were marked by hers,
and so my tired heart

col tormentoso fianco
a partir teco i lor pensier nascosti.
Così avestu riposti
de' be' vestigi sparsi
ancor tra' fiori et l'erba,
che la mia vita acerba
lagrimando trovasse ove acquetarsi!
ma come po s'appaga
l'alma dubbiosa et vaga.

Ovunque gli occhi volgo
trovo un dolce sereno
pensando: "Qui percosse il vago lume."
Qualunque erba o fior colgo,
credo che nel terreno
aggia radice ov' ella ebbe in costume
gir fra le piagge e 'l fiume
et talor farsi un seggio
fresco fiorito et verde.
Così nulla sen perde,
et più certezza averne fora il peggio.
Spirto beato, quale
se' quando altrui fai tale?

O poverella mia, come se' rozza!
Credo che tel conoschi:
rimanti in questi boschi.

returns with a pained body
to share with you the thoughts which they have hidden.
If only you had left
some lovely footprints still
among the grass and flowers
so that my bitter life
in tears might find a place where it could rest!
My vague and unsure soul
must do the best it can.

Wherever my eyes turn
I find sweet brightness there
and think: "That lovely light once struck right here."
All grass or blooms I pick
I think have had their roots
in that same ground where she was wont to walk
between the banks and river
and sometimes made a seat,
fresh, flowering, and green.
This way no part is lost,
and knowing more exactly would be worse.
How great you are, blessèd spirit,
when you do this to others.

O my poor little thing, how coarse you are!
I think you know it though.
Stay here inside these woods!

126

Chiare fresche et dolci acque,
ove le belle membra
pose colei che sola a me par donna,
gentil ramo ove piacque
(con sospir mi rimembra)
a lei di fare al bel fianco colonna;
erba et fior che la gonna
leggiadra ricoverse
co l'angelico seno;
aere sacro sereno
ove Amor co' begli occhi il cor m'aperse:
date udienzia insieme
a le dolenti mie parole estreme.

S' egli è pur mio destino,
e 'l cielo in ciò s'adopra,
ch' Amor quest'occhi lagrimando chiuda,
qualche grazia il meschino
corpo fra voi ricopra,
e torni l'alma al proprio albergo ignuda;
la morte fia men cruda
se questa spene porto
a quel dubbioso passo,
ché lo spirito lasso
non poria mai in più riposato porto
né in più tranquilla fossa
fuggir la carne travagliata et l'ossa.

Tempo verrà ancor forse
ch' a l'usato soggiorno
torni la fera bella et mansueta,
et là 'v' ella mi scorse
nel benedetto giorno
volga la vista disiosa et lieta,
cercandomi, et—o pieta—
già terra infra le pietre
vedendo, Amor l'inspiri
in guisa che sospiri
sì dolcemente che mercé m'impetre

126

Clear, cool, sweet, running waters
where she, for me the only
woman, would rest her lovely body;
kind branch on which it pleased her
(I sigh to think of it)
to make a column for her lovely side;
and grass and flowers which her gown,
richly flowing, covered
with its angelic folds;
sacred air serene
where Love with those fair eyes opened my heart:
listen all of you together
to these my mournful, my last words.

If it, indeed, must be my fate,
and Heaven works its ways,
that Love close up these eyes while they still weep,
let grace see my poor body
be buried there among you
and let my soul return to its home naked;
then death would be less harsh
if I could bear this hope
unto that fearful crossing,
because the weary soul
could never in a more secluded port,
in a more tranquil grave,
flee from my poor belabored flesh and bones.

And there will come a time, perhaps,
that to the well-known place
the lovely animal returns, and tamed,
and there where she first saw me
that day which now is blessed,
she turns her eyes with hope and happiness
in search of me, and—ah, the pity—
to see me there as dust
among the stones, Love will
inspire her and she will sigh
so sweetly she will win for me some mercy

et faccia forza al cielo,
asciugandosi gli occhi col bel velo. 39

Da' be' rami scendea
(dolce ne la memoria)
una pioggia di fior sovra 'l suo grembo,
et ella si sedea
umile in tanta gloria,
coverta già de l'amoroso nembo; 45
qual fior cadea sul lembo,
qual su le treccie bionde
ch' oro forbito et perle
eran quel dì a vederle,
qual si posava in terra et qual su l'onde,
qual con un vago errore
girando parea dir: "Qui regna Amore." 52

Quante volte diss' io
allor, pien di spavento:
"Costei per fermo nacque in paradiso!"
Così carco d'oblio
il divin portamento
e 'l volto e le parole e 'l dolce riso 58
m'aveano, et sì diviso
da l'imagine vera,
ch' i' dicea sospirando:
"Qui come venn' io o quando?"
credendo esser in ciel, non là dov' era.
Da indi in qua mi piace
quest'erba sì ch' altrove non ò pace. 65

Se tu avessi ornamenti quant' ài voglia,
poresti arditamente
uscir del bosco et gir infra la gente. 68

and force open the heavens
drying her eyes there with her lovely veil.

Falling from gracious boughs,
I sweetly call to mind,
were flowers in a rain upon her bosom,
and she was sitting there
humble in such glory
now covered in a shower of love's blooms:
a flower falling on her lap,
some fell on her blond curls,
like pearls set into gold
they seemed to me that day;
some fell to rest on ground, some on the water,
and some in lovelike wandering
were circling down and saying, "Here Love reigns."

How often I would say
at that time, full of awe:
"For certain she was born up there in Heaven!"
And her divine behavior,
her face and words and her sweet smile
so filled me with forgetfulness
and so divided me
from the true image
that I would sigh and say:
"Just how and when did I come here?"
thinking I was in Heaven, not where I was;
and since then I have loved
this bank of grass and find peace nowhere else.

If you had all the beauty you desired,
you could with boldness leave
the wood and make your way among mankind.

127

In quella parte dove Amor mi sprona
conven ch' io volga le dogliose rime
che son seguaci de la mente afflitta:
quai fien ultime, lasso, et qua' fien prime?
Collui che del mio mal meco ragiona
mi lascia in dubbio, sì confuso ditta.
Ma pur quanto la storia trovo scritta
in mezzo 'l cor che sì spesso rincorro
co la sua propria man de' miei martiri
dirò, perché i sospiri
parlando àn triegua et al dolor soccorro.
Dico che perch' io miri
mille cose diverse attento et fiso,
sol una donna veggio e 'l suo bel viso.

Poi che la dispietata mia ventura
m'à dilungato dal maggior mio bene,
noiosa inesorabile et superba,
Amor col rimembrar sol mi mantene:
onde s' io veggio in giovenil figura
incominciarsi il mondo a vestir d'erba,
parmi veder in quella etate acerba
la bella giovenetta ch' ora è donna;
poi che sormonta riscaldando il sole,
parmi qual esser sòle
fiamma d'amor che 'n cor alto s'endonna;
ma quando il dì si dole
di lui che passo passo a dietro torni,
veggio lei giunta a' suoi perfetti giorni.

In ramo fronde o ver viole in terra
mirando a la stagion che 'l freddo perde
et le stelle miglior acquistan forza,
ne gli occhi ò pur le violette e 'l verde
di ch' era nel principio de mia guerra
Amor armato sì ch' ancor mi sforza,
et quella dolce leggiadretta scorza
che ricopria le pargolette membra
dove oggi alberga l'anima gentile
ch' ogni altro piacer vile

127

In that direction which love urges me
I now must turn these verses full of sorrow,
the followers of my afflicted mind:
which shall be last, alas, and which the first?
The one who speaks to me about my ills
leaves me in doubt; he dictates with confusion.
Still I shall tell the story of my suffering
as much as I find written in his hand
within my heart which often I review,
so that my sighs have rest
and speaking is a help to all my grief.
I say that, though I gaze
intent and fixed on a thousand different things,
I see one lady only, one fair face.

Because it was my pitiless misfortune
that sent me from that greatest good of mine,
painful, inexorable, and proud,
Love gives me life through memory alone;
so if I see the world in youthful guise
as it begins to clothe itself in green,
it is as if I see in unripe age
that beautiful young girl who's now a lady;
and once the sun has risen warming things,
it seems that it is like
the flame of love that rules high in the heart;
but when the day laments
the step by step retreating of the sun,
I see her having reached her perfect days.

When I gaze at the leaves upon a branch
or violets on the ground when cold grows less
and all the better stars have gained their force,
my eyes still see the green and violets
with which Love at the outset of my war
was armed so that he drives me even now,
and that sweet lovely little tender bark
that covers every tiny part of her
in which today there dwells the noble soul
that makes all other pleasure

sembiar mi fa: sì forte mi rimembra
del portamento umile
ch' allor fioriva et poi crebbe anzi agli anni,
cagion sola et riposo de' miei affanni.

Qualor tenera neve per li colli
dal sol percossa veggio di lontano,
come 'l sol neve mi governa Amore,
pensando nel bel viso più che umano
che po da lunge gli occhi miei far molli
ma da presso gli abbaglia et vince il core,
ove fra 'l bianco et l'aureo colore
sempre si mostra quel che mai non vide
occhio mortal, ch' io creda, altro che 'l mio;
et del caldo desio
che quando sospirando ella sorride
m'infiamma sì che oblio
niente aprezza, ma diventa eterno:
né state il cangia né lo spegne il verno.

Non vidi mai dopo notturna pioggia
gir per l'aere sereno stelle erranti
et fiammeggiar fra la rugiada e 'l gielo,
ch' i' non avesse i begli occhi davanti
ove la stanca mia vita s'appoggia,
quali io gli vidi a l'ombra d'un bel velo;
et sì come di lor bellezze il cielo
splendea quel dì, così bagnati ancora
li veggio sfavillare, ond' io sempre ardo.
Se 'l sol levarsi sguardo,
sento il lume apparir che m'innamora;
se tramontarsi al tardo,
parmel veder quando si volge altrove,
lassando tenebroso onde si move.

Se mai candide rose con vermiglie
in vasel d'oro vider gli occhi miei
allor allor da vergine man colte,
veder pensaro il viso di colei
ch' avanza tutte l'altre meraviglie
con tre belle eccellenzie in lui raccolte:
le bionde treccie sopra 'l collo sciolte

seem vile to me; so strong is my remembrance
of gracious modesty
that flowered once, then grew beyond,
sole cause as well as rest for all my woes.

When sometimes in the distance on the hills
I see fresh-fallen snow struck by the sun,
Love works on me the way sun does on snow,
as I think of that face more fair than human
which from afar can bring tears to my eyes
but up close dazzles them and wins my heart,
where there between the white and golden color
is always on display that which no eye
has ever seen, I think, except my own;
and of a burning passion,
that when she smiles and sighs I am inflamed,
so that forgetfulness
means nothing and instead becomes eternal;
summer can't change it, nor winter put it out.

I've never seen after a night of rain
the wandering stars as they move through clear air
and all aflame between the dew and frost,
that I did not have her fair eyes before me,
the eyes on which my weary life depends,
that I saw shadowed by a lovely veil;
and just as on that day the sky was splendid
with all their beauty, so bathed in tears
I see them sparkle still, and I burn on.
And if I watch the sunrise,
I feel the light that makes me love approaching;
with sunset in the evening
I seem to see her when she turns to go
leaving the place behind her all in darkness.

If ever roses white and some vermilion
within a golden vase my eyes have seen
picked at that moment fresh by virgin hands,
it was as if they saw the face of her
who far excels all other wondrous things
with those three lovely excellences it gathers:
the golden tresses loosened on her neck

ov' ogni latte perderia sua prova,
e le guancie ch' adorna un dolce foco.
Ma pur che l'ora un poco
fior bianchi et gialli per le piaggie mova,
torna a la mente il loco
e 'l primo dì ch' i' vidi a l'aura sparsi
i capei d'oro ond' io sì subito arsi.

Ad una ad una annoverar le stelle
e 'n picciol vetro chiuder tutte l'acque
forse credea, quando in sì poca carta
novo penser di ricontar mi nacque
in quante parti il fior de l'altre belle
stando in se stessa à la sua luce sparta,
a ciò che mai da lei non mi diparta;
né farò io, et se pur talor fuggo,
in cielo e 'n terra m'à racchiuso i passi,
perch' a gli occhi miei lassi
sempre è presente, ond' io tutto mi struggo;
et così meco stassi
ch' altra non veggio mai né veder bramo,
né 'l nome d'altra ne' sospir miei chiamo.

Ben sai, canzon, che quant' io parlo è nulla
al celato amoroso mio pensero
che dì et notte ne la mente porto,
solo per cui conforto
in così lunga guerra anco non pero,
che ben m'avria già morto
la lontananza del mio cor piangendo;
ma quinci da la morte indugio prendo.

against whose color no milk could compare,
and cheeks that are adorned with a sweet fire.
But if the slightest breeze
just moves a white and yellow field of flowers
the place comes back to mind
and the first day I saw free in the breeze
the golden hair that made me burn so quick.

Perhaps I thought I could count one by one
the stars or in a little glass enclose
the sea, when the strange thought first came to me
that I could tell about in so few pages
every place the flower of all beauties,
remaining one, has scattered all her light
so that from her never may I be parted;
nor shall I be, and if at times I flee,
from heaven to earth she has closed in my steps,
for to my weary eyes
she's always present and I'm all consumed;
so she remains with me
and I see no one else, nor wish to see,
nor in my sighs call out another's name.

You well know, song, that all I say is nothing
beside the loving thought that hides in me,
that night and day I carry in my mind,
and through whose comfort only
I do not perish in so long a war
which would by now have killed me
from weeping for the absence of my heart;
but from this thought I gain a stay of death.

128

Italia mia, ben che 'l parlar sia indarno
a le piaghe mortali
che nel bel corpo tuo sì spesse veggio,
piacemi almen che' miei sospir sian quali
spera 'l Tevero et l'Arno,
e 'l Po, dove doglioso et grave or seggio. 6
Rettor del cielo, io cheggio
che la pietà che ti condusse in terra
ti volga al tuo diletto almo paese:
vedi, Segnor cortese,
di che lievi cagion' che crudel guerra;
e i cor' ch' endura et serra
Marte superbo et fero
apri tu, Padre, e 'ntenerisci et snoda;
ivi fa' che 'l tuo vero,
qual io mi sia, per la mia lingua s'oda. 16

Voi cui Fortuna à posto in mano il freno
de le belle contrade
(di che nulla pietà par che vi stringa):
che fan qui tante pellegrine spade?
perché 'l verde terreno
del barbarico sangue si depinga? 22
Vano error vi lusinga,
poco vedete et parvi veder molto,
che 'n cor venale amor cercate o fede;
qual più gente possede
colui é più da' suoi nemici avolto. 27
O diluvio raccolto
di che deserti strani
per inondar i nostri dolci campi!
Se da le proprie mani
questo n'avene, or chi fia che ne scampi? 32

Ben provide Natura al nostro stato
quando de l'Alpi schermo
pose fra noi et la tedesca rabbia;
ma 'l desir cieco, encontra 'l suo ben fermo,
s'è poi tanto ingegnato
ch' al corpo sano à procurato scabbia. 38

128

O, my own Italy, though words be useless
to heal the mortal wounds
I see covering all your lovely body,
I wish at least for my sighs to be one
with Tiber's hopes and Arno's
as well as Po's, where I sit sad and grieving.
Ruler of Heaven, I beg now
that mercy which once brought you down to earth
turn you again to your dear, holy land.
You see, my gracious Lord,
what trivial reasons cause so cruel a war.
Those hearts enclosed and hardened
by fierce and haughty Mars,
open them, Father, free and soften them,
and there the truth divine
be heard through me, unworthy as I am.

You, in whose hands Fortune has placed the reins
of these beautiful regions
for which it seems no pity moves your heart,
what are the swords of strangers doing here?
In order that the verdant plain
be painted red with that barbaric blood?
Flattered by futile error,
little you see, thinking you see so much,
for you seek love and trust in venal hearts—
he with more followers
is more surrounded by his enemies.
O deluge that was gathered
from what strange wilderness
to inundate all our sweet countryside!
If by our very hands
this has been done, then who will rescue us?

Nature provided well for our condition
when she raised up the screen
of Alps between us and the German rage;
but blind desire fighting its own good
then managed to contrive
a way to make this healthy body sick.

Or dentro ad una gabbia
fiere selvagge et mansuete gregge
s'annidan sì che sempre il miglior geme;
et è questo del seme
(per più dolor) del popol senza legge,
al qual, come si legge,
Mario aperse sì 'l fianco
che memoria de l'opra anco non langue,
quando assetato et stanco
non più bevve del fiume acqua che sangue.

Cesare taccio, che per ogni piaggia
fece l'erbe sanguigne
di lor vene, ove 'l nostro ferro mise.
Or par (non so per che stelle maligne)
che 'l cielo in odio n'aggia,
vostra mercé, cui tanto si commise.
Vostre voglie divise
guastan del mondo la più bella parte.
Qual colpa, qual giudicio, o qual destino
fastidire il vicino
povero, et le fortune afflitte et sparte
perseguire, e 'n disparte
cercar gente, et gradire
che sparga 'l sangue et venda l'alma a prezzo?
Io parlo per ver dire,
non per odio d'altrui né per disprezzo.

Né v'accorgete ancor per tante prove
del bavarico inganno
ch' alzando il dito colla morte scherza?
Peggio è lo strazio, al mio parer, che 'l danno.
Ma 'l vostro sangue piove
più largamente, ch' altr' ira vi sferza.
Da la matina a terza
di voi pensate, et vederete come
tien caro altrui chi tien sé così vile.
Latin sangue gentile:
sgombra da te queste dannose some,
non far idolo un nome
vano, senza soggetto;
ché 'l furor de lassù, gente ritrosa,

Now inside the same cage
the savage beasts there with the gentle flocks
are nested, so the best are made to groan;
and this comes from the seed
(even worse pain) of the unlawful people
whose sides, as the book tells us,
Marius so split open
that memory of the deed has yet to fade,
when he thirsty and tired
drank as much blood as water from the river.

I will not speak of Caesar who once turned
the plains of green bloodred
With all those veins in which he plunged our steel.
It seems—who knows by what malignant stars—
that now the heavens hate us,
and thanks to you, to whom so much was trusted.
Your disagreeing wills
despoil the fairest part of all the world.
What fault, what judgment, or what destiny
makes you harass your wretched
neighbor, and broken, scattered fortunes
persecute, and seek out
foreign friends, glad to know
that they shed blood and sell their souls for money?
I speak to tell the truth,
not out of hate or scorn for anybody.

With all the proof are you not yet aware
of the Bavarian treason
which with hand raised makes death into a game?
The shame seems worse to me than actual loss.
But you let your blood flow
more generously, for other anger whips you.
From dawn to tierce examine
yourselves, and you will see that one who thinks
himself so cheap cannot hold others dear.
O noble Latin blood,
release yourself from such a harmful burden,
and do not idolize
a name that is so empty;
if that fury up there, that savage race,

vincerne d'intelletto
peccato è nostro, et non natural cosa. 80

"Non è questo 'l terren ch' i' toccai pria?
non è questo il mio nido
ove nudrito fui sì dolcemente?
non è questa la patria in ch' io mi fido,
madre benigna et pia,
che copre l'un et l'altro mio parente?" 86
Per Dio, questo la mente
talor vi mova, et con pietà guardate
le lagrime del popol doloroso
che sol da voi riposo
dopo Dio spera. Et pur che voi mostriate 91
segno alcun di pietate,
vertù contra furore
prenderà l'arme, et fia 'l combatter corto;
ché l'antico valore
ne l'italici cor non è ancor morto. 96

Signor, mirate come 'l tempo vola
et sì come la vita
fugge et la Morte n'è sovra le spalle.
Voi siete or qui; pensate a la partita,
ché l'alma ignuda et sola
conven ch' arrive a quel dubbioso calle. 102
Al passar questa valle,
piacciavi porre giù l'odio et lo sdegno,
venti contrari a la vita serena;
et quel che 'n altrui pena
tempo si spende, in qualche atto più degno 107
o di mano o d'ingegno,
in qualche bella lode,
in qualche onesto studio si converta:
così qua giù si gode,
et la strada del ciel si trova aperta. 112

Canzone, io t'ammonisco
che tua ragion cortesemente dica,
perché tra gente altera ir ti convene
et le voglie son piene
già de l'usanza pessima et antica,

conquer our intellect,
the sin is ours, and not the course of nature.

"Is this not the first soil my body touched?
Is this not my own nest
in which I found myself so sweetly nourished?
Is this not my own country I have trust in,
kind mother, merciful,
who serves to shelter both of my dear parents?"
In God's name may your mind
for once be moved by this, and look with pity
upon the tears of all your grieving people
who, after God, look only
to you for hope. If only you would show
some sign of piety,
then virtue against rage
will take up arms, and battle will be short,
for all that ancient valor
in the Italian heart is not yet dead?

My lords, take note of how time flies
on earth as well as how our life
is fleeing, and how Death is at our backs.
Now you are here, but think of your departure:
the soul, alone and naked,
one day will come to face the perilous pass.
As you pass through this valley,
now put aside your hatred and disdain,
those winds that blow against a peaceful life;
and all the time you spend
in giving others pain, to some more worthy act
of hand or intellect,
to some beautiful praise,
to worthy dedication be converted:
thus here on earth is joy,
and open is the pathway to the heavens.

My song, I bid that you
express your sentiments with courtesy,
for you must go among a haughty people
whose wills are still so full
of that ancient, most vicious of all habits,

del ver sempre nemica. 118
Proverai tua ventura
fra' magnanimi pochi a chi 'l ben piace;
di' lor: "Chi m'assicura?
I' vo gridando: Pace, pace, pace." 122

129

Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte
mi guida Amor, ch' ogni segnato calle
provo contrario a la tranquilla vita.
Se 'n solitaria piaggia rivo o fonte,
se 'nfra duo poggi siede ombrosa valle,
ivi s'acqueta l'alma sbigottita; 6
et come Amor l'envita
or ride or piange or teme or s'assecura,
e 'l volto, che lei segue ov' ella il mena,
si turba et rasserena
et in un esser picciol tempo dura:
onde a la vista uom di tal vita esperto
diria: "Questo arde et di suo stato è incerto." 13

Per alti monti et per selve aspre trovo
qualche riposo; ogni abitato loco
è nemico mortal degli occhi miei.
A ciascun passo nasce un penser novo
de la mia donna, che sovente in gioco
gira 'l tormento ch' i' porto per lei; 19

et a pena vorrei
cangiar questo mio viver dolce amaro,
ch' i' dico: "Forse anco ti serva Amore
ad un tempo migliore;
forse a te stesso vile, altrui se' caro";
et in questa trapasso sospirando:
"Or porrebbe esser ver? or come? or quando?" 26

always truth's enemy.
But you must try your fortune
among the valiant few who love the good;
tell them: "Who will protect me?
I go my way beseeching: Peace, peace, peace."

129

From thought to thought, mountain to mountain top
Love leads me on, and every trodden path
I find unsuited to a peaceful life.
If on a lonely slope a brook or spring
or a dark vale between two peaks exists,
that is the place my frightened soul takes refuge.
And with Love urging it
it laughs or weeps, now fears and now takes heart,
and my face, following the soul's direction,
clouds up and clears again
never remaining long in one condition:
at such a sight the man who knows such fate
would say, "He burns and his state is uncertain."

In the high mountains and harsh woods I find
some peace; and every habitable place
is for my eyes a mortal enemy.
With every step I take comes a new thought
about my lady which will turn
to pleasure torment that I bear for her.

And on the verge of changing
the bittersweetness of this life of mine
I say: "Perhaps it is Love saving you
for better days; perhaps,
you're loathsome to yourself but dear to her."
Then to another thought I pass and sigh:
"Now could this be the truth? But how? But when?"

Ove porge ombra un pino alto od un colle
talor m'arresto, et pur nel primo sasso
disegno co la mente il suo bel viso.
Poi ch' a me torno, trovo il petto molle
de la pietate, et alor dico: "Ahi lasso,
dove se' giunto? et onde se' diviso?" 32
Ma mentre tener fiso
posso al primo pensier la mente vaga,
et mirar lei et obliar me stesso,
sento Amor sì da presso
che del suo proprio error l'alma s'appaga;
in tante parti et sì bella la veggio
che se l'error durasse, altro non cheggio. 39

I' l'ò più volte (or chi fia che mi 'l creda?)
ne l'acqua chiara et sopra l'erba verde
veduto viva, et nel troncon d'un faggio
e 'n bianca nube, sì fatta che Leda
avria ben detto che sua figlia perde
come stella che 'l sol copre col raggio; 45
et quanto in più selvaggio
loco mi trovo e 'n più deserto lido,
tanto più bella il mio pensier l'adombra.
Poi quando il vero sgombra
quel dolce error, pur lì medesmo assido
me freddo, pietra morta in pietra viva,
in guisa d'uom che pensi et pianga et scriva. 52

Ove d'altra montagna ombra non tocchi,
verso 'l maggiore e 'l più espedito giogo
tirar mi suol un desiderio intenso;
Indi i miei danni a misurar con gli occhi
comincio, e 'ntanto lagrimando sfogo
di dolorosa nebbia il cor condenso, 58

alor ch' i' miro et penso
quanta aria dal bel viso mi diparte
che sempre m' è sì presso et sì lontano.
Poscia fra me pian piano:
"Che sai tu, lasso? forse in quella parte
or di tua lontananza si sospira."
Et in questo penser l'alma respira. 65

Whenever pine or hillside casts its shade
I sometimes stop, and on the first stone seen
with all my mind I etch her lovely face;
returning to reality I find
my breast softened with pity, and I cry:
"What have you come to? How far from her you are!"
But for as long as I
can hold my wandering mind on the first thought
and look at her and not think of myself,
I feel Love so close by
my soul is satisfied by its own error;
in many places I see her, so lovely
that all I ask is that my error last.

I've seen her many times (now who'll believe me?)
in the clear water and above green grass,
alive, and in the trunk of a beech tree,
and in a cloud of white so shaped that Leda
would certainly have said her daughter's beauty
fades like a star in sunlight next to it.
The wilder the place is,
the more barren the shore where I may be,
the more lovely do my thoughts depict her image;
but when the truth dispels
that sweet mistake, right then and there I sit
down cold as dead stone set on living rock,
a statue that can think and weep and write.

Up to that mountain which no mountain shades,
up through the highest and the freest path,
I feel my whole desire being drawn.
Then I begin to measure with my eyes
my losses, and while weeping I unburden
the painful cloud that gathers in my heart
to see and think how much
air separates me from her lovely face
always so near but yet so far from me.
Then softly to myself:
"How do you know, poor fool? Perhaps out there,
somewhere, someone is sighing for your absence";
and with this thought my soul begins to breathe.

Canzone, oltra quell'alpe,
là dove il ciel è più sereno et lieto,
mi rivedrai sovr' un ruscel corrente
ove l'aura si sente
d'un fresco et odorifero laureto;
ivi è 'l mio cor et quella che 'l m'invola:
qui veder poi l'imagine mia sola.

130

Poi che 'l camin m'è chiuso di mercede,
per desperata via son dilungato
dagli occhi ov' era (i' non so per qual fato)
riposto il guidardon d'ogni mia fede.

Pasco 'l cor di sospir, ch' altro non chiede,
e di lagrime vivo, a pianger nato;
né di ciò duolmi, perché in tale stato
è dolce il pianto più ch' altri non crede.

Et sol ad una imagine m'attegno
che fe' non Zeusi o Prasitele o Fidia,
ma miglior mastro et di più alto ingegno.

Qual Scizia m'assicura o qual Numidia,
s' ancor non sazia del mio esilio indegno
così nascosto mi ritrova Invidia?

My song, beyond those Alps
where skies are more serene and happier,
you'll see me by a running brook once more
where you can sense the aura
distilling from the fresh and fragrant laurel:
there is my heart and there is one who steals it;
what you see here is but the ghost of me.

130

Since I have found the road to mercy closed,
on a despairing path I have gone far
from those eyes where (I know not by what fate)
reward for all my faithfulness is placed.

My heart I feed with sighs—that's all it asks,
and I survive on tears—I, born to weep;
nor am I bothered, for in such a state
weeping is sweet, and more than one imagines.

And to one image only I hold on,
not made by Zeuxis, Praxiteles, or Phidias,
but by a better artist with more talent.

What Scythia or Numidia can protect me,
if, still not filled by my unworthy exile,
Envy can find me, hidden though I am?

131

Io canterei d'Amor sì novamente
ch' al duro fianco il dì mille sospiri
trarrei per forza, et mille alti desiri
raccenderei ne la gelata mente; 4

e 'l bel viso vedrei cangiar sovente,
et bagnar gli occhi, et più pietosi giri
far, come suol chi degli altrui martiri
et del suo error quando non val si pente; 8

et le rose vermiglie infra la neve
mover da l'ora, et discovrir l'avorio
che fa di marmo chi da presso 'l guarda, 11

e tutto quel per che nel viver breve
non rincresco a me stesso, anzi mi glorio
d'esser servato a la stagion più tarda. 14

132

S' amor non è, che dunque è quel ch' io sento?
ma s' egli è amor, per Dio, che cosa et quale?
se bona, ond' è l'effetto aspro mortale?
se ria, ond' è sì dolce ogni tormento? 4

S' a mia voglia ardo, ond' è 'l pianto e lamento?
s' a mal mio grado, il lamentar che vale?
O viva morte, o dilettoso male,
come puoi tanto in me s' io nol consento? 8

Et s' io 'l consento, a gran torto mi doglio.
Fra sì contrari venti in frale barca
mi trovo in alto mar senza governo, 11

sì lieve di saver, d'error sì carca
ch' i' medesmo non so quel ch' io mi voglio,
e tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno. 14

131

I'd like to sing of love so differently
that I could draw by force from her hard side
a thousand sighs a day, and I could kindle
in her cold mind a thousand deep desires;

I'd like to see her lovely face change often,
her eyes becoming wet, and with more pity
turning as one does who repents too late
of another's suffering and his own error;

to see those deep red roses in the snow
moved by the breeze, the ivory uncovered
that turns to marble who observes it close,

and all of her that has made this short life
not burdensome to bear, but rather glorious
in keeping for a season more mature.

132

If it's not love, then what is it I feel:
but if it's love, by God, what is this thing?
If good, why then the bitter mortal sting?
If bad, then why is every torment sweet?

If I burn willingly, why weep and grieve?
And if against my will, what good lamenting?
O living death, O pleasurable harm,
how can you rule me if I not consent?

And if I do consent, it's wrong to grieve.
Caught in contrasting winds in a frail boat
on the high seas I am without a helm,

so light of wisdom, so laden of error,
that I myself do not know what I want,
and shiver in midsummer, burn in winter.

133

Amor m'à posto come segno a strale,
come al sol neve, come cera al foco,
et come nebbia al vento; et son già roco,
Donna, mercé chiamando, et voi non cale.

Dagli occhi vostri uscio 'l colpo mortale
contra cui non mi val tempo né loco;
da voi sola procede (et parvi un gioco)
il sole e 'l foco e 'l vento ond' io son tale.

I pensier son saette, e 'l viso un sole,
e 'l desir foco; e 'nseme con quest'arme
mi punge Amor, m'abbaglia et mi distrugge;

et l'angelico canto et le parole,
col dolce spirto ond' io non posso aitarme,
son l'aura inanzi a cui mia vita fugge.

134

Pace non trovo et non ò da far guerra,
e temo et spero, et ardo et son un ghiaccio,
et volo sopra 'l cielo et giaccio in terra,
et nulla stringo et tutto 'l mondo abbraccio.

Tal m'à in pregion che non m'apre né serra,
né per suo mi riten né scioglie il laccio,
et non m'ancide Amore et non mi sferra,
né mi vuol vivo né mi trae d'impaccio.

Veggio senza occhi, et non ò lingua et grido,
et bramo di perir et cheggio aita,
et ò in odio me stesso et amo altrui.

Pascomi di dolor, piangendo rido,
egualmente mi spiace morte et vita.
In questo stato son, Donna, per vui.

133

Love's made me like a target for his arrows,
like snow in sun, like wax within a fire,
and like the mist in wind; and now I'm hoarse,
lady, from begging mercy—and you don't care.

From out your eyes there came the mortal blow
against which time and place are of no use;
from you alone there comes (you take it lightly)
the sun, fire, and wind that make me such.

Your thoughts are arrows and your face a sun,
desire, fire: with these arms all at once
Love pierces me, he dazzles and he melts me;

and your angelic singing and your words
with your sweet breath which I cannot resist
compose the aura before which my life flees.

134

I find no peace, and I am not at war,
I fear and hope, and burn and I am ice;
I fly above the heavens, and lie on earth,
and I grasp nothing, and embrace the world.

One keeps me jailed who neither locks nor opens,
nor keeps me for her own nor frees the noose;
Love does not kill, nor does he loose my chains;
he wants me lifeless but won't loosen me.

I see with no eyes, shout without a tongue;
I yearn to perish, and I beg for help;
I hate myself and love somebody else.

I thrive on pain and laugh with all my tears;
I dislike death as much as I do life:
because of you, lady, I am this way.

135

Qual più diversa et nova
cosa fu mai in qualche stranio clima,
quella, se ben s'estima,
più mi rasembra: a tal son giunto, Amore.
Là onde il dì ven fore
vola un augel che sol, senza consorte,
di volontaria morte
rinasce et tutto a viver si rinova.
Così sol si ritrova
lo mio voler, et così in su la cima
de' suoi alti pensieri al sol si volve,
et così si risolve,
et così torna al suo stato di prima;
arde et more et riprende i nervi suoi
et vive poi con la fenice a prova.

Una petra è sì ardita
là per l'indico mar, che da natura
tragge a sé il ferro e 'l fura
dal legno, in guisa che' navigi affonde.
Questo prov' io fra l'onde
d'amaro pianto che quel bello scoglio
à col suo duro argoglio
condutta ove affondar conven mia vita.
Così l'alm' à sfornita
(furando 'l cor che fu già cosa dura
et me tenne un, ch' or son diviso et sparso)
un sasso a trar più scarso
carne che ferro. O cruda mia ventura!
che 'n carne essendo veggio trarmi a riva
ad una viva dolce calamita.

Ne l'estremo occidente
una fera è soave et queta tanto
che nulla più, ma pianto
et doglia et morte dentro agli occhi porta;
molto convene accorta
esser qual vista mai ver lei si giri:
pur che gli occhi non miri,
l'altro puossi veder securamente.

135

The strangest and most wondrous
thing ever seen in any foreign land,
if judged correctly, is
what I am like—I've reached that point now, Love.
There where the day is born
there flies that bird unique, without a consort,
that voluntarily
dies to be born, renewing all its life.
Just so is my desire
unique, and just so at the summit
of its high thoughts it turns to face the sun,
and so it is consumed
and so returns to its original state;
it burns and dies and then renews its forces
and goes on living, vying with the phoenix.

There is a stone so bold
out in the Indian Sea that naturally
attracts iron to itself
and steals it from the wood, and so ships sink.
I prove this in the waves
of bitter weeping, for that lovely rock
with all of its hard pride
has driven me to where my life must sink.
Just so a stone more avid
to attract the flesh than iron has stripped my soul,
(stealing my heart which once was something hard,
keeping me whole who now
am so divided). Oh, how cruel my fortune
to see myself in flesh drawn to the shore
by power of a sweet and living magnet!

In farthest occident
there lives an animal more tame and gentle
than any other beast,
but tears and grief and death are in her eyes;
whoever turns his sight
to look at her must do so with great care:
as long as he not look
her in the eyes, all other parts are safe.

Ma io incauto dolente
corro sempre al mio male, et so ben quanto
n'ò sofferto et n'aspetto; ma l'engordo
voler ch' è cieco et sordo
sì mi trasporta che 'l bel viso santo
et gli occhi vaghi fien cagion ch' io pera
di questa fera angelica innocente.

Surge nel mezzo giorno
una fontana, e tien nome dal sole,
che per natura sòle
bollir le notti e 'n sul giorno esser fredda;
et tanto si raffredda
quanto 'l sol monta et quanto è più da presso.
così aven a me stesso
che son fonte di lagrime et soggiorno:
quando 'l bel lume adorno
ch' è 'l mio sol s'allontana, et triste et sole
son le mie luci et notte oscura è loro,
ardo allor; ma se l'oro
e i rai veggio apparir del vivo sole,
tutto dentro et di for sento cangiarme
et ghiaccio farme, così freddo torno.

Un'altra fonte à Epiro
di cui si scrive ch' essendo fredda ella
ogni spenta facella
accende, et spegne qual trovasse accesa.
L'anima mia, ch' offesa
ancor non era d'amoroso foco,
appressandosi un poco
a quella fredda ch' io sempre sospiro,
arse tutta, et martiro
simil giamai né sol vide né stella,
ch' un cor di marmo a pietà mosso avrebbe;
poi che 'nfiammata l'ebbe,
rispensela vertù gelata et bella.
Così più volte à 'l cor racceso et spento,
i 'l so che 'l sento et spesso me n'adiro.

Fuor tutt' i nostri lidi
ne l'isole famose di Fortuna,

But I, wretched and rash,
run always to my harm, and well I know
I've suffered and expect to still; but greedy
passion that's blind and deaf
transports me so that her fair, holy face
and charming eyes will bring about my death
by this angelic beast of innocence.

There springs up in the south
a fountain that is named after the sun, and by its nature always
boils in the night and in the day is cold;
and it grows cold depending
how the sun mounts and how it grows more near.
And so it is with me
who am the fount and dwelling place of tears,
for when that light of beauty
that is my sun, departs,
and sad and lonely
my eyes become and night is dark for them,
I burn then; but when gold
and rays from that live sun appear to me
I feel myself changing inside and out
and turn to ice, so cold I have become.

Of another fount in Epirus
it's written that although it may be cold,
it can light up a torch
unlit and put out any that are burning.
My soul, that was not harmed
as yet by all the raging flames of love,
by merely coming close
to that cold one for whom I always sigh,
caught fire, and suffering
like that no sun or star has ever seen—
it would have made a marble heart feel pity;
and once it was set burning,
then virtue fair and frozen put it out.
So often she's unlit and lit my heart,
I know this for I feel it and grow angry.

Far out beyond our shores
and on those famous islands are Fortune's

due fonti à; chi de l'una
bee mor ridendo, et chi de l'altra, scampa.
Simil fortuna stampa
mia vita, ché morir poria ridendo
del gran piacer ch' io prendo,
se nol temprassen dolorosi stridi. 83
Amor ch' ancor mi guidi
pur a l'ombra di fama occulta et bruna,
tacerem questa fonte ch' ogni or piena
ma con più larga vena
veggiam quando col Tauro il sol s'aduna:
così gli occhi miei piangon d'ogni tempo
ma più nel tempo che Madonna vidi. 90

Chi spiasse, canzone,
quel ch' i' fo, tu poi dir: "Sotto un gran sasso
in una chiusa valle ond' esce Sorga
si sta; né chi lo scorga
v'è se no Amor, che mai nol lascia un passo,
et l'imagine d'una che lo strugge,
ch' e' per sé fugge tutt' altre persone." 97

136

Fiamma dal Ciel su le tue treccie piova,
malvagia, che dal fiume et da le ghiande
per l'altrui impoverir se' ricca et grande,
poi che di mal oprar tanto ti giova, 4

nido di tradimenti in cui si cova
quanto mal per lo mondo oggi si spande,
de vin serva, di letti, et di vivande,
in cui lussuria fa l'ultima prova! 8

Per le camere tue fanciulle et vecchi
vanno trescando, et Belzebùb in mezzo
co' mantici et col foco et co li specchi. 11

Già non fostù nudrita in piume al rezzo,
ma nuda al vento et scalza fra gli stecchi;
or vivi sì ch' a Dio ne venga il lezzo. 14

two springs: who drinks from one
dies laughing; from the other, he revives.
A similar fortune stamps
my life, for I could die from all the laughter
that comes from the great pleasure given me,
were it not tempered by my anguished cries.
Love, you who guides me still
even to shades of fame hidden and dark,
we will not talk of this spring always full
but fullest at the time
we see the sun with Taurus in conjunction.
And so my eyes shed tears continuously
but more the month that I first saw my lady.

Should someone want, my song,
to know, you tell them that "beneath great stone
in a closed valley where the Sorgue springs forth
he is; and no one sees him
save Love, who never leaves him by a step,
and the image of the one destroying him.
And as for him, he flees all other people."

136

May Heaven's fire pour down on your tresses,
since doing evil gives you so much pleasure,
impious one, who, after streams and acorns,
got fat and rich by starving other people;

you nest of treachery in which is hatched
all evil that today spreads through the world,
you slave of wine, of bedrooms, and of food,
high testing ground for every kind of lust!

In all your rooms young girls and older men
are romping round, the devil in the middle
with bellows and his fire and his mirrors.

You were not raised on cushions in cool shade
but naked to the wind, barefoot in thorns.
May God smell all the stink from how you live!

137

L'avara Babilonia à colmo il sacco
d'ira di Dio, e di vizii empi et rei,
tanto che scoppia, ed à fatti suoi dei
non Giove et Palla, ma Venere et Bacco. 4

Aspettando ragion mi struggo et fiacco;
ma pur novo soldan veggio per lei,
lo qual farà (non già quand' io vorrei)
sol una sede, et quella fia in Baldacco. 8

Gl'idoli suoi sarranno in terra sparsi
et le torre superbe al ciel nemiche,
e i suoi torrer di for come dentro arsi. 11

Anime belle et di virtute amiche
terranno il mondo, et poi vedrem lui farsi
aureo tutto et pien de l'opre antiche. 14

138

Fontana di dolore, albergo d'ira,
scola d'errori et templo d'eresia,
già Roma or Babilonia falsa et ria,
per cui tanto si piange et si sospira, 4

o fucina d'inganni, o pregion dira
ove 'l ben more e 'l mal si nutre et cria,
di vivi inferno: un gran miracol fia
se Cristo teco alfine non s'adira. 8

Fondata in casta et umil povertate,
contra' tuoi fondatori alzi le corna,
putta sfacciata! Et dove ài posto spene? 11

Negli adulteri tuoi, ne le mal nate
ricchezze tante? Or Constantin non torna.
Ma tolga il mondo tristo che 'l sostene! 14

137

The greed of Babylon has so filled the sack
with God's own wrath, with wicked, evil vices,
that it's about to burst; she's made her gods
Venus and Bacchus instead of Jove and Pallas.

I'm tired and distressed waiting for justice;
but I see a new sultan coming for her
who will make it (it can't be soon enough)
into one seat, and that will be in Baghdad.

Her idols shall be scattered on the ground
and her proud towers, enemies of Heaven,
her tower dwellers burned inside and out.

Beautiful souls who are the friends of virtue
will rule the world, and then we'll see it all
turn golden and fill up with ancient worth.

138

Fountain of sorrow, dwelling place of wrath,
the school of errors, heresy's own temple
once Rome, now false and wicked Babylon,
the cause for sighing and for so much weeping,

O foundry of deceit, O horrible prison
where the good dies and bad is born and nourished,
a living hell; more than a miracle
if Christ does not at last show you his anger.

Founded in pure and humble poverty,
against your founders you raise up your horns,
you brazen whore! Where have you placed your hope?

In your adulterers? in your ill-gotten
riches so great? Constantine cannot come back,
for Hell has taken him, and there he stays.

139

Quanto più disiose l'ali spando
verso di voi, o dolce schiera amica,
tanto fortuna con più visco intrica
il mio volare et gir mi face errando. 4

Il cor che mal suo grado a torno mando
è con voi sempre in quella valle aprica
ove 'l mar nostro più la terra implica;
l'altr' ier da lui partimmi lagrimando. 8

I' da man manca, e' tenne il camin dritto;
i' tratto a forza, et e' d'Amore scorto,
egli in Jerusalèm, et io in Egitto. 11

Ma sofferenza è nel dolor conforto;
ché per lungo uso già fra noi prescritto
il nostro esser insieme è raro et corto. 14

140

Amor, che nel penser mio vive et regna
e 'l suo seggio maggior nel mio cor tene,
talor armato ne la fronte vene;
ivi si loca et ivi pon sua insegna. 4

Quella ch' amare et sofferir ne 'nsegna
e vol che 'l gran desio, l'accesa spene
ragion, vergogna, et reverenza affrene,
di nostro ardir fra se stessa si sdegna. 8

Onde Amor paventoso fugge al core,
lasciando ogni sua impresa, et piange et trema;
ivi s'asconde et non appar più fore. 11

Che poss' io far, temendo il mio signore,
se non star seco infin a l'ora estrema?
Ché bel fin fa chi ben amando more. 14

139

The more I spread my wings wide with desire
in your direction, O sweet flock of friends,
the more does Fortune with her birdlime snare
my flight and make me wander far from you.

Against her will the heart I send in search
is always with you in that open valley,
the place where sea most wraps around our land;
I left him there in tears the other day.

I took the left, he went by the straight path;
I drawn by Fortune, and he led by Love;
he to Jerusalem and I to Egypt.

But patience is a comfort in my grief;
for it has been established through long usage
that our togetherness is rare and short.

140

Love, who lives and reigns within my thought
and holds the highest seat inside my heart
at times appears all armed upon my face,
and there he camps, and there he sets his banner.

The one who teaches us patience and love
and wants my great desire, my burning hope
to be controlled by reason, shame and reverence,
is angry at our boldness—more than she shows.

And so Love full of fear flees to my heart,
abandoning his plans, and weeps and trembles;
and there he hides and never comes outside.

What can I do, if my own lord is frightened
except stay with him till the final hour?
Who loves well dying comes to a good end.

141

Come talora al caldo tempo sòle
semplicetta farfalla al lume avezza
volar negli occhi altrui per sua vaghezza,
onde aven ch' ella more, altri si dole: 4

così sempre io corro al fatal mio sole
de gli occhi onde mi ven tanta dolcezza,
che 'l fren de la ragion Amor non prezza,
e chi discerne è vinto da chi vole. 8

E veggio ben quant' elli a schivo m'ànno
e so ch' i' ne morrò veracemente,
ché mia vertù non po contra l'affanno; 11

ma sì m'abbaglia Amor soavemente
ch' i' piango l'altrui noia et no 'l mio danno,
et cieca al suo morir l'alma consente. 14

142

A la dolce ombra de le belle frondi
corsi fuggendo un dispietato lume
che 'n fin qua giù m'ardea dal terzo cielo;
et disgombrava già di neve i poggi
l'aura amorosa che rinova il tempo,
et fiorian per le piagge l'erbe e i rami. 6

Non vide il mondo sì leggiadri rami
né mosse il vento mai sì verdi frondi
come a me si mostrar quel primo tempo,
tal che temendo de l'ardente lume
non volsi al mio refugio ombra di poggi,
ma de la pianta più gradita in cielo. 12

Un lauro mi difese allor dal cielo,
onde più volte, vago de' bei rami,
da po' son gito per selve et per poggi;
né giamai ritrovai tronco né frondi

141

As sometimes when the sun shines bright
a foolish butterfly, seeking the light
in its desire, flies into someone's eyes
and kills itself and makes the other cry:

I, too, am always racing toward the fatal
light of her eyes that show me so much sweetness
it makes Love careless with the reins of reason,
and who discerns is vanquished by desire.

And I can see how much her eyes disdain me,
and I am certain I will die from it—
my strength cannot hold out against such pain;

but so mellifluously Love dazzles me
that I mourn for her wrong, not my own pain,
and my soul, blind, consents to its own death.

142

To the sweet shade of all those lovely leaves
I ran in flight from that merciless light
that down upon me burned from the third Heaven;
the snow by then was melting in the hills
from the loving aura that renews the season,
and in the meadows bloomed the grass and branches.

The world has never seen such graceful branches
nor ever has the wind moved greener leaves
as showed themselves to me in that first season,
so that while fearful of the burning light
I did not choose for refuge shade of hills
but rather of the tree most loved in Heaven.

A laurel then protected me from Heaven,
where many times in love with its fair branches
I've gone since then through woods, across the hills;
and never have I found a trunk or branches

tanto onorate dal superno lume
che non mutasser qualitate a tempo.

Però più fermo ogni or di tempo in tempo,
seguendo ove chiamar m'udia dal cielo
e scorto d'un soave et chiaro lume,
tornai sempre devoto ai primi rami
et quando a terra son sparte le frondi
et quando il sol fa verdeggiare i poggi.

Selve, sassi, campagne, fiumi, et poggi,
quanto è creato, vince et cangia il tempo;
ond' io cheggio perdono a queste frondi
se rivolgendo poi molt'anni il cielo
fuggir disposi gl'invescati rami
tosto ch' i' 'ncominciai di veder lume.

Tanto mi piacque prima il dolce lume
ch' i' passai con diletto assai gran poggi
per poter appressar gli amati rami;
ora la vita breve e 'l loco e 'l tempo
mostranmi altro sentier di gire al cielo
et di far frutto, non pur fior et frondi.

Altr'amor, altre frondi, et altro lume,
altro salir al ciel per altri poggi
cerco (che n'è ben tempo), et altri rami.

that was so honored by supernal light
they did not change their worth with change of season.

So firmer all the more, season to season,
and following the call I heard from Heaven
and guided by a graceful and clear light,
devoted I return to the first branches
when here on earth are scattered all the leaves
and when the sun turns into green the hills.

The woods, the rocks, the fields, rivers and hills,
and all things made are won and changed by season;
and so I beg the pardon of these leaves
if after many years and turns of heaven
I decided to escape the sticky branches
as soon as I began to see the light.

At first I found so pleasing the sweet light
that happily I crossed the greatest hills
in order to be close to those loved branches;
and now short life as well as place and season
show me another path that leads to Heaven
and to bear fruit, not merely blooms and leaves.

Another love and other leaves and light,
another climb to Heaven by other hills
I seek (the season's right) and other branches.

143

Quando io v'odo parlar sì dolcemente
com' Amor proprio a' suoi seguaci instilla,
l'acceso mio desir tutto sfavilla
tal ch' enfiammar devria l'anime spente; 4

trovo la bella donna allor presente
ovunque mi fu mai dolce o tranquilla,
ne l'abito ch' al suon non d'altra squilla
ma di sospir mi fa destar sovente. 8

Le chiome a l'aura sparse et lei conversa
indietro veggio, et così bella riede
nel cor come colei che tien la chiave; 11

ma 'l soverchio piacer, che s'atraversa
a la mia lingua, qual dentro ella siede
di mostrarla in palese ardir non àve. 14

144

Né così bello il sol giamai levarsi
quando 'l ciel fosse più de nebbia scarco,
né dopo pioggia vidi 'l celeste arco
per l'aere in color tanti variarsi, 4

in quanti fiammeggiando trasformarsi
nel dì ch' io presi l'amoroso incarco
quel viso al quale (et son nel mio dir parco)
nulla cosa mortal pote aguagliarsi. 8

I' vidi Amor che' begli occhi volgea
soave sì ch' ogni altra vista oscura
da indi in qua m'incominciò apparere, 11

Sennuccio, i' 'l vidi et l'arco che tendea,
tal che mia vita poi non fu secura
et è sì vaga ancor del rivedere. 14

143

When I hear you speak words of so much sweetness
as Love himself inspires in his flock,
glowing desire in me turns to sparks
enough to set a dead soul all aflame;

and then I find the lovely lady present
wherever she was sweet or kind to me
appearing so that often I'm awakened
not by the sound of any bell but sighs.

Her hair free in the breeze I see, and she
turning to me: so lovely she comes back
into my heart for which she has the key;

but too much joy, which is an obstacle
stopping my tongue, does not possess the courage
to clearly show what she is like inside.

144

I never saw the sunrise look so lovely
not even with the sky all free of mist
nor after rain the rainbow in the sky
changing so many colors through the air

as, on the day I took my loving burden,
her face in shades of flaming color changed,
that face with which (and I am spare with words)
no other mortal thing can be compared.

I saw Love move those lovely eyes of hers
so graciously that every other sight
from that time on began to seem quite dark.

Sennuccio, I saw him with his bow drawn,
and after that my life was never safe;
and yet it goes on yearning for his sight.

145

Ponmi ove 'l sole occide i fiori et l'erba,
o dove vince lui il ghiaccio et la neve;
ponmi ov' è il carro suo temprato et leve,
et ov' è chi cel rende o chi cel serba; 4

ponmi in umil fortuna od in superba,
al dolce aere sereno, al fosco et greve;
ponmi a la notte, al dì lungo ed al breve,
a la matura etate od a l'acerba; 8

ponmi in cielo od in terra od in abisso,
in alto poggio, in valle ima et palustre,
libero spirto od a' suoi membri affisso; 11

ponmi con fama oscura o con illustre:
sarò qual fui, vivrò com' io son visso,
continuando il mio sospir trilustre. 14

146

O d'ardente vertute ornata et calda
alma gentil cui tante carte vergo,
o sol già d'onestate intero albergo,
torre in alto valor fondata et salda, 4

o fiamma, o rose sparse in dolce falda
di viva neve in ch' io mi specchio et tergo,
o piacer onde l'ali al bel viso ergo
che luce sovra quanti il sol ne scalda: 8

del vostro nome se mie rime intese
fossin sì lunghe, avrei pien Tyle et Battro,
la Tana e 'l Nilo, Atlante Olimpo et Calpe. 11

Poi che portar nol posso in tutte et quattro
parti del mondo, udrallo il bel paese
ch'Appennin parte e 'l mar circonda et l'Alpe. 14

145

Put me where sun can kill the grass and flowers,
or where the ice and snow can conquer him;
put me there where his cart is mild and light,
where those give him to us or take him back;

put me in lowly fortune or in high,
in air that's sweet and clear, or dark and heavy;
put me in night or day that's long or short,
in ripe old age or in the time of youth;

put me in Heaven or earth or in abyss,
high hill or in a valley low and swampy,
a spirit free or one fixed to its body;

put me in darkness or the light of fame:
I'll be what I have been, live as I've lived
continuing to sigh trilustrally.

146

O noble soul with glowing virtue warm
and fair for whom I line so many pages,
O the sole place where chastity lives whole,
a tower founded on deep worth, secure,

O flame, O roses spread on a sweet drift
of living snow where looking makes me pure,
O joy raising my wings to your fair face,
which shines far brighter than the sun can warm;

with your own name, were my poems understood
so far away, I'd fill the Thule and Bactria,
the Don, the Nile, Atlas, Olympus, Calpe.

But since it cannot reach the world's four parts,
let that fair land the Apennines divide
and sea and Alps surround, hear it ring out.

147

Quando 'l voler, che con due sproni ardenti
et con un duro fren mi mena et regge,
trapassa ad or ad or l'usata legge
per far in parte i miei spirti contenti,

trova chi le paure et gli ardimenti
del cor profondo ne la fronte legge;
et vede Amor, che sue imprese corregge,
folgorar ne' turbati occhi pungenti.

Onde come colui che 'l colpo teme
di Giove irato, si ritragge indietro,
ché gran temenza gran desire affrena;

ma freddo foco et paventosa speme
de l'alma che traluce come un vetro
talor sua dolce vista rasserena.

148

Non Tesin, Po, Varo, Arno, Adige et Tebro,
Eufrate, Tigre, Nilo, Ermo, Indo et Gange,
Tana, Istro, Alfeo, Garona, e 'l mar che frange,
Rodano, Ibero, Ren, Sena, Albia, Era, Ebro;

non edra, abete, pin, faggio o genebro
poria 'l foco allentar che 'l cor tristo ange
quant' un bel rio ch' ad ogni or meco piange
co l'arboscel che 'n rime orno et celebro.

Questo un soccorso trovo fra gli assalti
d'Amore, ove conven ch' armato viva
la vita che trapassa a sì gran salti.

Così cresca il bel lauro in fresca riva,
et chi 'l piantò pensier leggiadri et alti
ne la dolce ombra al suon de l'acque scriva!

147

When my desire, with its two burning spurs
and a hard bit that lead and rule my way,
sometimes transgresses the accepted rule
and gives a bit of joy to all my spirits,

he finds the one who reads upon my brow
the fears and boldness deep inside my heart,
and he sees Love, whose actions he corrects,
that flashes in her angry, piercing eyes.

And so, like anyone who fears the blow
of angry Jove, he backs up and retreats
because great fear can hold back great desire.

But cooling fires and the hope that trembles
within my soul, transparent as is glass,
will sometime bring back peace to her sweet face.

148

Not Tessin, Tiber, Varo, Arno, Adige, Po,
Euphrates, Ganges, Tigris, Nile, Erno, Indo,
Don, Danube, Alpheus, Garonne, the sea-breaker
Rhône, Rhine, Iber, Seine, Elbe, Loire, Ebro;

not ivy, fir, pine, beech, or juniper
could slow the fire with which my sad heart rages
like the fair stream that always weeps with me
and the slim tree my verse adorns and lauds;

I find they are a help amid attacks
by Love where I in armor must live out
my life which moves along in leaps and bounds.

Let this fair laurel grow on the fresh bank,
and he who planted it, in its sweet shade,
to watery sounds, write high and happy thoughts.

149

Di tempo in tempo mi si fa men dura
l'angelica figura e 'l dolce riso,
et l'aria del bel viso
e de gli occhi leggiadri meno oscura. 4

Che fanno meco omai questi sospiri
che nascean di dolore
et mostravan di fore
la mia angosciosa et desperata vita?
S' aven che 'l volto in quella parte giri
per acquetare il core,
parmi vedere Amore
mantener mia ragione et darmi aita. 12
Né però trovo ancor guerra finita
né tranquillo ogni stato del cor mio,
ché più m'arde 'l desio
quanto più la speranza m'assicura. 16

150

"Che fai, alma? Che pensi? Avrem mai pace?
Avrem mai tregua? od avrem guerra eterna?"—
"Che fia di noi non so, ma in quel ch' io scerna
a' suoi begli occhi il mal nostro non piace."— 4

"Che pro, se con quelli occhi ella ne face
di state un ghiaccio, un foco quando inverna?"—
"Ella non, ma colui che gli governa."—
"Questo ch' è a noi, s' ella sel vede et tace?"— 8

"Talor tace la lingua e 'l cor si lagna
ad alta voce, e 'n vista asciutta et lieta
piange dove mirando altri nol vede."— 11

"Per tutto ciò la mente non s'acqueta,
rompendo il duol che 'n lei s'accoglie et stagna,
ch' a gran speranza uom misero non crede." 14

149

From time to time that form which is angelic,
that smile so sweet, are not so hard on me;
the tone of her fair face
and of her charming eyes appears less dark to me.

Then why are all these sighs still with me now
that used to come from sorrow
and were the way of showing
how desperate and anguished was my life?
If I should turn my face in her direction
to give my heart some rest,
it seems that I see Love
taking my side and offering his help.
But I find that this war is still not over
and that the state of my heart finds no peace:
the more desire burns
the more my hope fills me with confidence.

150

"What now, soul? You think that peace will ever come?
A truce, perhaps? Or everlasting war?"
"I do not know our future, but I see
our suffering is not pleasing to her eyes."

"What good is that, if with those eyes she turns us
to ice in summer, in wintertime to fire?"
"Not she, but he who has control of them."
"What's that to us, if she sees and is silent?"

"Sometimes she's silent but her heart weeps loud,
and even if her face is dry and happy,
she weeps where no one else who looks can see."

"Nevertheless my mind is not at rest,
and all the grief that stagnates there breaks out;
a poor man has no faith in hopes so grand."

151

Non d'atra et tempestosa onda marina
fuggio in porto giamai stanco nocchiero,
com' io dal fosco et torbido pensero
fuggo ove 'l gran desio mi sprona e 'nchina; 4

né mortal vista mai luce divina
vinse, come la mia quel raggio altero
del bel dolce soave bianco et nero
in che in suoi strali Amor dora et affina. 8

Cieco non già, ma faretrato il veggo,
nudo se non quanto vergogna il vela,
garzon con ali, non pinto ma vivo. 11

Indi mi mostra quel ch' a molti cela,
ch' a parte a parte entro a' begli occhi leggo
quant' io parlo d'Amore et quant' io scrivo. 14

152

Questa umil fera, un cor di tigre o d'orsa
che 'n vista umana o 'n forma d'angel vene,
in riso e 'n pianto, fra paura et spene
mi rota sì ch' ogni mio stato inforsa. 4

Se 'n breve non m'accoglie o non mi smorsa,
ma pur come suol far tra due mi tene,
per quel ch' io sento al cor gir fra le vene
dolce veneno, Amor, mia vita è corsa. 8

Non po più la vertù fragile et stanca
tante varietati omai soffrire,
che 'n un punto arde, agghiaccia, arrossa, e 'mbianca. 11

Fuggendo spera i suoi dolor finire
come colei che d'ora in ora manca,
ché ben po nulla chi non po morire. 14

151

No weary helmsman ever rushed for port
away from black and stormy waves at sea
as I flee from my dark and turbid trouble
to where my surging passion urges me;

and never has divine light conquered more
a mortal's sight than mine did that high ray
of the sweet, lovely, gentle black and white
in which Love dips in gold his sharpened arrows.

He is not blind; I see him with a quiver,
naked, except where shame commands a veil,
a boy with wings, not painted but alive.

From there he shows me what he hides from many:
in her fair eyes I read there word by word
all that I say of love and all I write.

152

This kind, wild beast, this tiger's heart or bear's
that comes in human shape or form of angel,
in tears, in laughter, amid fear and hope,
spins me around and makes my state uncertain.

If she won't take me soon or let me free
or keeps on holding me between the two,
from that sweet poison running through my heart
and veins I feel, Love, that my life is over.

My frail and weary strength now is unable
to suffer all this change, for all at once
it burns and freezes, blushes and turns pale.

It hopes by fleeing to end all its grief
like one who feels he's failing gradually,
for he is powerless who cannot die.

153

Ite, caldi sospiri, al freddo core,
rompete il ghiaccio che pietà contende;
et se prego mortale al ciel s'intende
morte o mercé sia fine al mio dolore. 4

Ite, dolci penser, parlando fore
di quello ove 'l bel guardo non s'estende;
se pur sua asprezza o mia stella n'offende,
sarem fuor di speranza et fuor d'errore. 8

Dir se po ben per voi, non forse a pieno,
che 'l nostro stato è inquieto et fosco,
sì come 'l suo pacifico et sereno. 11

Gite securi omai, ch' Amor ven vosco;
et ria fortuna po ben venir meno,
s' ai segni del mio sol l'aere conosco. 14

154

Le stelle, il cielo, et gli elementi a prova
tutte lor arti et ogni estrema cura
poser nel vivo lume in cui Natura
si specchia e 'l sol, ch' altrove par non trova. 4

L'opra è sì altera, sì leggiadra et nova,
che mortal guardo in lei non s'assecura,
tanta negli occhi bei for di misura
par ch' Amore et dolcezza et grazia piova. 8

L'aere percosso da' lor dolci rai
s'infiamma d'onestate, et tal diventa
che 'l dir nostro e 'l penser vince d'assai; 11

basso desir non è ch' ivi si senta,
ma d'onor, di vertute. Or quando mai
fu per somma beltà vil voglia spenta? 14

153

Go now, my sighs of warmth, to her cold heart
and break the ice which fights against her pity,
and if a mortal's prayer be heard in Heaven,
let death or mercy end my suffering.

Go now, sweet thoughts of mine, and clearly speak
about that which her fair gaze cannot reach;
if still her harshness strikes us, or my star,
then we'll be out of hope and out of error.

You can explain, although perhaps not fully,
how our state is as dark and as unquiet
as hers is full of peace and clarity.

Now go in safety, for Love comes with you;
and our bad fortune could come to an end
to judge the weather by my own sun's signs.

154

The stars, the heavens, the elements in contest
put all their art, put all the utmost care
into that living light which Nature mirrors
and sun which finds its equal nowhere else.

This feat is so sublime, so new and charming,
that mortal sight cannot feel safe with it;
it seems that Love within her lovely eyes
is raining grace and sweetness beyond measure.

The air that's struck by those sweet rays of hers
burns with her chastity, becoming such
that our own thought and words it far surpasses;

no base desire can be felt therein,
only virtue and honor. Now when and ever
was vile desire quenched by highest beauty?

155

Non fur ma' Giove et Cesare sì mossi
(a folminar colui, questo a ferire)
che pietà non avesse spente l'ire
e lor de l'usate arme ambeduo scossi:

piangea Madonna, e 'l mio signor ch' i' fossi
volse a vederla et suoi lamenti a udire,
per colmarmi di doglia et di desire
et ricercarmi le medolle et gli ossi.

Quel dolce pianto mi depinse Amore,
anzi scolpio, et que' detti soavi
mi scrisse entro un diamante in mezzo 'l core,

ove con salde ed ingegnose chiavi
ancor torna sovente a trarne fore
lagrime rare et sospir lunghi et gravi.

156

I' vidi in terra angelici costumi
et celesti bellezze al mondo sole,
tal che di rimembrar mi giova et dole
ché quant' io miro par sogni, ombre, et fumi.

Et vidi lagrimar que' duo bei lumi
ch' àn fatto mille volte invidia al sole,
et udi' sospirando dir parole
che farian gire i monti et stare i fiumi.

Amor, senno, valor, pietate, et doglia
facean piangendo un più dolce concento
d'ogni altro che nel mondo udir si soglia;

ed era il cielo a l'armonia sì intento
che non se vedea in ramo mover foglia,
tanta dolcezza avea pien l'aere e 'l vento.

155

Both Jove and Caesar never were so moved,
the one to wound, the other one to thunder,
that pity would not put their anger out
and shake them both from their accustomed arms:

my lady wept and my lord wanted me
to see her there and listen to her sorrow,
to fill me full of grief and with desire
to move me to the marrow of my bones.

Love painted that sweet flow of tears for me,
he sculpted them, and all those gracious words
he wrote in diamond deep inside my heart,

where with his powerful and skillful keys
he still returns and often he draws forth
the precious tears, the long and heavy sighs.

156

I saw on earth angelic qualities
and heavenly beauties unique in the world,
and to recall them pains and pleases me,
for all I see seems shadow, smoke, and dreams.

And I saw those two lovely lights in tears
both envied by the sun a thousand times,
and I heard words pronounced amid deep sighing
that would make mountains move and rivers stop.

Love, wisdom and worth, pity and sorrow
made out of tears a sweeter symphony
than any other heard throughout the world;

the heavens were so entranced by harmony
that not a leaf upon its branch dared move,
so full of sweetness was the air and wind.

157

Quel sempre acerbo et onorato giorno
mandò sì al cor l'imagine sua viva
che 'ngegno o stil non fia mai che 'l descriva;
ma spesso a lui co la memoria torno. 4

L'atto d'ogni gentil pietate adorno
e 'l dolce amaro lamentar ch' i' udiva
facean dubbiar se mortal donna o diva
fosse che 'l ciel rasserenava intorno. 8

La testa or fino, et calda neve il volto,
ebeno i cigli, et gli occhi eran due stelle
onde Amor l'arco non tendeva in fallo; 11

perle et rose vermiglie ove l'accolto
dolor formava ardenti voci et belle,
fiamma i sospir, le lagrime cristallo. 14

158

Ove ch' i' posi gli occhi lassi o giri
per quetar la vaghezza che gli spinge,
trovo chi bella donna ivi depinge,
per far sempre mai verdi i miei desiri. 4

Con leggiadro dolor par ch' ella spiri
alta pietà che gentil core stringe;
oltra la vista, agli orecchi orna e 'nfinge
sue voci vive et suoi santi sospiri. 8

Amor e 'l ver fur meco a dir che quelle
ch' i' vidi eran bellezze al mondo sole,
mai non vedute più sotto le stelle; 11

né sì pietose et sì dolci parole
s'udiron mai, né lagrime sì belle
di sì belli occhi uscir mai vide 'l sole. 14

157

That day forever more so cruel and honored
sent to my heart its image so alive
there is no wit or style that can describe it;
but often I recall it with my mind.

Her attitude, adorned with gracious pity,
the bittersweet lamenting that I heard,
caused me to wonder were she mortal woman
or goddess, for she cleared the sky around her.

Her head fine gold, her face was like warm snow,
her eyebrows ebony, her eyes two stars
from where Love never bent his bow in vain;

pearls and red roses where the gathered grief
was transformed into ardent, lovely words,
her sighs a flame, her tears as though of crystal.

158

Any place I rest or turn my weary eyes
to quiet the desire that impels them,
I find there one who draws the lovely lady
to keep desire in me always green.

With gentle sorrow she seems to inspire
profound pity that wrings a noble heart;
and more than sight my ears seem to imagine
her living voice and all her holy sighs.

Love and the truth were on my side to say
these beauties seen were unique in the world
and never seen again beneath the stars;

nor words so sweet and so compassionate
were ever heard, nor tears so lovely seen
under the sun pour from such lovely eyes.

159

In qual parte del Ciel, in quale Idea
era l'esempio onde Natura tolse
quel bel viso leggiadro in ch' ella volse
mostrar qua giù quanto lassù potea? 4

Qual ninfa in fonti, in selve mai qual dea
chiome d'oro sì fino a l'aura sciolse?
quando un cor tante in sé vertuti accolse?
ben che la somma è di mia morte rea. 8

Per divina bellezza indarno mira
chi gli occhi de costei giamai non vide,
come soavemente ella gli gira; 11

non sa come Amor sana et come ancide,
chi non sa come dolce ella sospira
et come dolce parla et dolce ride. 14

160

Amor et io, sì pien di meraviglia
come chi mai cosa incredibil vide,
miriam costei quand' ella parla o ride
che sol se stessa et nulla altra simiglia. 4

Dal bel seren de le tranquille ciglia
sfavillan sì le mie due stelle fide
ch' altro lume non è ch' infiammi et guide
chi d'amar altamente si consiglia. 8

Qual miracolo è quel, quando tra l'erba
quasi un fior siede, o ver quand' ella preme
col suo candido seno un verde cespo! 11

Qual dolcezza è ne la stagione acerba
vederla ir sola coi pensier suoi inseme,
tessendo un cerchio a l'oro terso et crespo! 14

159

From what part of the heavens, from what Idea
did Nature take the model to derive
that lovely charming face by which she chose
to show down here her power up above?

What fountain nymph, what woodland goddess ever
let such fine hair of gold flow in the breeze?
How did a heart collect so many virtues
the sum of which is guilty of my death?

Who seeks for divine beauty seeks in vain
if he has not yet looked upon those eyes
and seen how tenderly she makes them move;

he does not know how love can heal and kill
who does not know the sweetness of her sighs,
the sweetness of her speech, how sweet her smile.

160

Love and myself as full of wonderment
as one who sees the unbelievable,
marvel to see her speak or laugh, the one
who stands alone resembling no other.

From the fair heaven of her tranquil brows
those dual lights I trust in sparkle so
that no light's left to guide and to inflame
whoever hopes to follow noble love.

What miracle when she upon the grass
sits like a flower or when her white breast
presses against the greenness of a bush!

What sweetness when in the unripened season
you see her walking with her thoughts alone,
weaving a wreath for her bright curly gold.

161

O passi sparsi, o pensier vaghi et pronti,
o tenace memoria, o fero ardore,
o possente desire, o debil core,
oi occhi miei (occhi non già, ma fonti); 4

o fronde, onor de le famose fronti,
o sola insegna al gemino valore;
o faticosa vita, o dolce errore,
che mi fate ir cercando piagge et monti; 8

o bel viso, ove Amor inseme pose
gli sproni e 'l fren ond' el mi punge et volve
come a lui piace, e calcitrar non vale; 11

o anime gentili et amorose,
s' alcuna à 'l mondo, et voi, nude ombre et polve:
deh, ristate a veder quale è 'l mio male! 14

162

Lieti fiori et felici, et ben nate erbe
che Madonna pensando premer sòle,
piaggia ch' ascolti sue dolci parole
et del bel piede alcun vestigio serbe, 4

schietti arboscelli et verdi frondi acerbe,
amorosette et pallide viole,
ombrose selve ove percote il sole
che vi fa co' suoi raggi alte et superbe, 8

o soave contrada, o puro fiume
che bagni il suo bel viso et gli occhi chiari
et prendi qualità dal vivo lume: 11

quanto v'invidio gli atti onesti et cari!
Non fia in voi scoglio omai che per costume
d'arder co la mia fiamma non impari. 14

161

O useless steps, O thoughts charming and quick,
O binding memory, O burning love,
O powerful desire, O failing heart,
O my eyes (eyes no more, but fountains),

O leafy bough, honor of famous brows,
O single symbol for those dual values,
O weary life of mine, O my sweet error
which forces me to search the shores and hills,

O lovely face where Love has put together
both spurs and rein with which he pricks and turns me
as pleases him (and kicking back is useless),

O loving souls who love in graciousness,
if there are any, all you shades and dust,
ah, stay awhile and see what pain is mine.

162

Flowers joyful and glad, fortunate grass
on which my lady used to walk in thought,
shore that would listen to her words of sweetness
conserving traces of her lovely foot,

trees straight and slender, branches young and green,
violets pale and delicately lovely,
forests of shade on which the sunlight strikes
and makes you tall and proud with her own rays,

O gentle countryside, O river pure
that bathes her lovely face and her bright eyes
and takes its quality from her live light:

how much I envy you her fair, dear presence!
There's not a stone among you now that is
not learning how to burn with flame like mine.

163

Amor, che vedi ogni pensero aperto
e i duri passi onde tu sol mi scorgi,
nel fondo del mio cor gli occhi tuoi porgi
a te palese, a tutt' altri coverto. 4

Sai quel che per seguirte ò già sofferto,
et tu pur via di poggio in poggio sorgi
di giorno in giorno, et di me non t'accorgi,
che son sì stanco e 'l sentier m'è troppo erto. 8

Ben veggio io di lontano il dolce lume
ove per aspre vie mi sproni et giri,
ma non ò come tu da volar piume. 11

Assai contenti lasci i miei desiri
pur che ben desiando i' mi consume
né le dispiaccia che per lei sospiri. 14

164

Or che 'l ciel et la terra e 'l vento tace
et le fere e gli augelli il sonno affrena,
notte il carro stellato in giro mena
et nel suo letto il mar senz' onda giace, 4

vegghio, penso, ardo, piango; et chi mi sface
sempre m'è inanzi per mia dolce pena:
guerra è 'l mio stato, d'ira e di duol piena,
et sol di lei pensando ò qualche pace. 8

Così sol d'una chiara fonte viva
move 'l dolce et l'amaro ond' io mi pasco,
una man sola mi risana et punge; 11

et perché 'l mio martir non giunga a riva,
mille volte il dì moro et mille nasco,
tanto da la salute mia son lunge. 14

163

Love, you who see my every thought clear through
and those hard steps where only you can guide me,
let your eyes reach to my heart's deepest part
that's clear to you but hidden to all others.

You know what I have suffered following you,
and still from day to day, from mount to mount
you climb up unaware that I am there,
that I'm so weary, and the path's too steep.

I do see in the distance that sweet light
with which you spur and turn me by hard ways,
but unlike you I have no wings to fly.

Quite satisfied you leave all my desires
as long as I'm consumed with loving well,
and that I sigh for her does not displease her.

164

Now that the heavens, earth and wind are silent
and sleep has beast and bird in its control,
while night is driving round her car of stars
and in its bed the sea rests wavelessly;

awake, I think, burn, weep; and who destroys me
is always in my mind to my sweet pain:
war is my state, I'm full of grief and anger—
only the thought of her gives me some peace.

So from one clear and living font alone
there springs the sweet and bitter that I feed on;
one hand alone can heal and wound me both;

and that my suffering may never end
I'm born and die a thousand times a day,
so far away am I from my salvation.

165

Come 'l candido pie' per l'erba fresca
i dolci passi onestamente move,
vertù che 'ntorno i fiori apra et rinove
de le tenere piante sue par ch' esca. 4

Amor, che solo i cor leggiadri invesca
né degna di provar sua forza altrove,
da' begli occhi un piacer sì caldo piove
ch' i' non curo altro ben né bramo altr'esca. 8

Et co l'andar et col soave sguardo
s'accordan le dolcissime parole
et l'atto mansueto umile et tardo. 11

Di tai quattro faville, et non già sole,
nasce 'l gran foco di ch' io vivo et ardo,
che son fatto un augel notturno al sole. 14

166

S' i' fussi stato fermo a la spelunca
là dove Apollo diventò profeta,
Fiorenza avria forse oggi il suo poeta,
non pur Verona et Mantoa et Arunca; 4

ma perché 'l mio terren più non s'ingiunca
de l'umor di quel sasso, altro pianeta
conven ch' i' segua et del mio campo mieta
lappole et stecchi co la falce adunca. 8

L'oliva è secca, et è rivolta altrove
l'acqua che di Parnaso si deriva,
per cui in alcun tempo ella fioriva. 11

Così sventura o ver colpa mi priva
d'ogni buon frutto, se l'eterno Giove
de la sua grazia sopra me non piove. 14

165

As soon as her white foot through the fresh grass
begins to take its decorous sweet steps,
a force that seems to come from her soft soles
renews and opens flowers that surround her.

Love, who entangles only gentle hearts
and does not deign to try his power elsewhere,
makes her fair eyes rain with delight so warm,
no other good, no other bait I yearn for.

And with her walk and with her look of softness
accord these words of hers of highest sweetness,
as do her gestures mild and slow and humble.

From those four sparks, and not from them alone,
comes that great blaze on which I live and burn—
I have become a nightbird in the sun.

166

Had I decided to stay in the cave,
in that place where Apollo became prophet,
Florence today, perhaps, would have its poet,
not just Verona, Mantua, and Arunca;

but since my land no longer springs with reeds
from water of that rock, another planet
I'm forced to follow and reap from my field
thistles and thorns by means of my hooked scythe.

The olive tree is withered and the waters
springing from Parnassus have turned elsewhere
that at one time would keep it in full bloom.

It's fault then or misfortune that deprives me
of all good fruit, if that eternal Jove
does not rain down upon me with his grace.

167

Quando Amor i belli occhi a terra inchina,
e i vaghi spirti in un sospiro accoglie
co le sue mani, et poi in voce gli scioglie
chiara, soave, angelica, divina, 4

sento far del mio cor dolce rapina
et sì dentro cangiar penseri et voglie
ch' i' dico: "Or fien di me l'ultime spoglie:
se 'l ciel sì onesta morte mi destina." 8

Ma 'l suon che di dolcezza i sensi lega
col gran desir d'udendo esser beata
l'anima al dipartir presta raffrena; 11

così mi vivo, et così avolge et spiega
lo stame de la vita che m'è data
questa sola fra noi del ciel sirena. 14

168

Amor mi manda quel dolce pensero
che secretario antico è fra noi due,
et mi conforta et dice che non fue
mai come or presto a quel ch' io bramo et spero. 4

Io, che talor menzogna et talor vero
ò ritrovato le parole sue,
non so s' il creda, et vivomi intra due:
né sì né no nel cor mi sona intero. 8

In questa passa 'l tempo, et ne lo specchio
mi veggio andar ver la stagion contraria
a sua impromessa et a la mia speranza. 11

Or sia che po: già sol io non invecchio;
già per etate il mio desir non varia;
ben temo il viver breve che n'avanza. 14

167

When Love lowers her fair eyes to the ground
and with his hands gathers her wandering breath
into a sigh, then frees it in a voice
that's clear, angelic, soft, and so divine,

I feel my heart is being sweetly ravished,
my thoughts and wishes changed so there inside
that I say: "Now here comes the final plunder,
if Heaven destines me to die so well."

But sound which binds my senses with its sweetness
holds back my soul now ready to depart
with great desire to be blessed with listening;

this way I live, this way she winds and unwinds
the spool of life that has been given me,
this, heaven's only siren here among us.

168

Love sends me that sweet thought, the one that is
a confidant of old between us two,
and comforts me and says I never was
so close to what I yearn and hope for now.

I, who have found his words at times a lie,
at times the truth, do not know if I can
believe him, and I live between the two:
not yes, not no rings true within my heart.

Meanwhile time passes, and the mirror shows
myself nearing the time that contradicts
both what he promises and my own hope.

So be it; but, not only I grow old;
and yes, my age does not change my desire;
I do fear, though, the short time left to live.

169

Pien d'un vago penser che me desvia
da tutti gli altri et fammi al mondo ir solo,
ad or ad ora a me stesso m'involo,
pur lei cercando che fuggir devria; 4

et veggiola passar sì dolce et ria
che l'alma trema per levarsi a volo,
tal d'armati sospir conduce stuolo
questa bella d'Amor nemica et mia. 8

Ben, si i' non erro, di pietate un raggio
scorgo fra 'l nubiloso altero ciglio,
che 'n parte rasserena il cor doglioso; 11

allor raccolgo l'alma, et poi ch' i' aggio
di scovrirle il mio mal preso consiglio,
tanto gli ò a dir che 'ncominciar non oso. 14

170

Più volte già dal bel sembiante umano
ò preso ardir co le mie fide scorte
d'assalir con parole oneste accorte
la mia nemica in atto umile et piano. 4

Fanno poi gli occhi suoi mio penser vano
per ch' ogni mia fortuna, ogni mia sorte,
mio ben, mio male, et mia vita et mia morte
quei che solo il po far l'à posto in mano. 8

Ond' io non pote' mai formar parola
ch' altro che da me stesso fosse intesa,
così m'à fatto Amor tremante et fioco. 11

Et veggi' or ben che caritate accesa
lega la lingua altrui, gli spirti involа:
chi po dir com' egli arde è 'n picciol foco. 14

169

Full of a loving thought, that makes me stray
from all the rest and go the world alone,
I steal myself away from me at times
and search for her alone whom I should flee;

I see her walking by so sweet and hard
that my soul shakes, about to take to flight,
for such an army of armed sighs she leads,
this lovely one, Love's enemy and mine.

It's true, if I'm not wrong, I see a ray
of pity on her cloudy and proud brow
that clears in part the sorrow in my heart;

then I collect my soul, and once decided
to show my hurt to her, I find there is
so much to tell her, I dare not begin.

170

Sometimes from her expression fair and kind
I've been encouraged with my faithful guides
to assail with words of virtue and of skill
my enemy of humble, modest bearing;

but then my thought is emptied by her eyes,
for all my fortune, all my destiny,
my good, my bad, my life, my death that one—
the only one who can—placed in her hands.

And so, I never could construct a word
that anyone but me could understand,
so weak and so unsteady Love has made me.

And I see clearly how a burning love
can bind somebody's tongue and steal his breath.
Who can say how he burns, burns but a little.

171

Giunto m'à Amor fra belle et crude braccia
che m'ancidono a torto, et s' io mi doglio
doppia 'l martir; onde pur com' io soglio
il meglio è ch' io mi mora amando et taccia;

ché poria questa il Ren qualor più agghiaccia
arder con gli occhi, et rompre ogni aspro scoglio,
et à sì egual a le bellezze orgoglio
che di piacer altrui par che le spiaccia.

Nulla posso levar io per mi' 'ngegno
del bel diamante ond' ell' à il cor sì duro,
l'altro è d' un marmo che si mova et spiri;

ned ella a me, per tutto 'l suo disdegno
torrà giamai, né per sembiante oscuro,
le mie speranze e i mei dolci sospiri.

172

O Invidia nimica di vertute,
ch' a' bei principii volentier contrasti,
per qual sentier così tacita intrasti
in quel bel petto, et con qual arti il mute?

Da radice n'ài svelta mia salute:
troppo felice amante mi mostrasti
a quella che' miei preghi umili et casti
gradì alcun tempo, or par ch' odi' et refute.

Né però che con atti acerbi et rei
del mio ben pianga e del mio pianger rida
poria cangiar sol un de' pensier mei,

non perché mille volte il dì m'ancida
fia ch' io non l'ami et ch' i' non speri in lei;
ché s' ella mi spaventa, Amor m'affida.

171

Love's given me to hard and lovely arms
that kill unjustly, and if I complain,
my suffering he doubles; so it is better
I die in love and silence as I'm wont;

her eyes could burn the Rhine when it's most frozen
and break its every hard and icy ridge;
so equal is her pride to all her beauty
that pleasing others seems to displease her.

There is no way that I can chip a part
of her heart's lovely diamond that's so hard—
the rest of her that moves and breathes is marble;

neither can she, for all of her disdain,
for all of her dark glances, ever take
away from me my hopes and my sweet sighs.

172

O Envy, you the enemy of virtue,
who gladly fights against all good beginnings,
what path led you so silently to enter
that lovely breast; with what art do you change it?

You've pulled out my salvation by its roots!
You showed me as too fortunate a lover
to her who liked my pure and humble prayers
a while, and now appears to hate and spurn them.

And though with gestures hard and cruel she weeps
at my own good and at my weeping laughs,
she cannot change a single thought of mine;

though she kill me a thousand times a day,
I'll love her still and always hope in her;
Love reassures me, though she frightens me.

173

Mirando 'l sol de' begli occhi sereno
ov' è chi spesso i miei depinge et bagna,
dal cor l'anima stanca si scompagna
per gir nel paradiso suo terreno;

poi trovandol di dolce et d'amar pieno,
quant' al mondo si tesse opra d'aragna
vede, onde seco et con Amor si lagna,
ch' à sì caldi gli spron, sì duro 'l freno.

Per questi estremi duo contrari et misti,
or con voglie gelate, or con accese,
stassi così fra misera et felice;

ma pochi lieti et molti penser tristi,
e 'l più si pente de l'ardite imprese,
tal frutto nasce di cotal radice.

174

Fera stella (se 'l cielo à forza in noi
quant' alcun crede) fu sotto ch' io nacqui,
et fera cuna dove nato giacqui,
et fera terra ov 'e' pie' mossi poi,

et fera donna che con gli occhi suoi
et con l'arco a cui sol per segno piacqui
fe' la piaga onde, Amor, teco non tacqui,
ché con quell'arme risaldar la poi.

Ma tu prendi a diletto i dolor miei;
ella non già, perché non son più duri,
e 'l colpo è di saetta et non di spiedo.

Pur mi consola che languir per lei
meglio è che gioir d'altra, et tu mel giuri
per l'orato tuo strale, et io tel credo.

173

While gazing at the clear sun of fair eyes
where dwells the one who wets and colors mine,
my weary soul detaches from my heart
and travels to its earthly paradise;

then finding it all full of bitter sweetness,
it sees that everything the world has spun
is spiderwebs, and it complains to Love,
whose spurs are very hot, whose bit so hard.

Between these two extremes mixed and contrasting,
now with desire frozen, now aflame,
there it remains, half miserable half happy;

it has few joyful thoughts and many sad ones,
and mostly it repents for its bold action;
from such a root as this such fruit is born.

174

Cruel was the star beneath which I was born
(if the heavens have such power as some think),
and cruel the cradle where I lay new born,
and cruel the ground on which I later stepped,

and cruel the lady who would with her eyes
and bow (she liked me only as a target)
inflict that wound I've mentioned to you, Love,
for with those very weapons you can heal it.

But you take great delight in all my pain;
not that she does, for it's not harsh enough;
the blow comes from an arrow not a spear.

Yet I'm consoled: better to languish for her
than to enjoy another—this you swear
to me by your gold shaft, and I believe you.

175

Quando mi vene inanzi il tempo e 'l loco
ov' i' perdei me stesso, e 'l caro nodo
ond' Amor di sua man m'avinse in modo
che l'amar mi fe' dolce e 'l pianger gioco,

solfo et esca son tutto, e 'l cor un foco
da quei soavi spirti i quai sempre odo
acceso dentro sì ch' ardendo godo,
et di ciò vivo et d'altro mi cal poco.

Quel sol che solo agli occhi mei resplende
coi vaghi raggi ancor indi mi scalda
a vespro tal qual era oggi per tempo;

et così di lontan m'alluma e 'ncende
che la memoria ad ogni or fresca et salda
pur quel nodo mi mostra e 'l loco e 'l tempo.

176

Per mezz' i boschi inospiti et selvaggi
onde vanno a gran rischio uomini et arme,
vo securo io, ché non po spaventarme
altri che 'l sol ch' à d'Amor vivo i raggi.

E vo cantando (o penser miei non saggi!)
lei che 'l ciel non poria lontana farme,
ch' i' l'ò negli occhi, et veder seco parme
donne et donzelle, et sono abeti et faggi.

Parmi d'udirla, udendo i rami et l'ore
et le frondi, et gli augei lagnarsi, et l'acque
mormorando fuggir per l'erba verde.

Raro un silenzio, un solitario orrore
d'ombrosa selva mai tanto mi piacque,
se non che dal mio sol troppo si perde.

175

When there comes to my mind the time and place
I lost myself, and that dear knot which Love
by his own hand bound me in such a way
that bitter he made sweet and weeping, pleasure,

I'm all sulphur and tinder, my heart a fire
lit by her gentle words I always hear,
burning within, enjoying that I burn—
on this I live and care for little else.

That sun which sheds its light for my eyes only
with all her loving rays still warms me now
at evening as she did in early day;

she from afar so brightens and ignites me
that memory forever fresh and whole
keeps showing me that knot, that place, that time.

176

Across those savage and unfriendly woods,
where even armed men travel at great risk,
safely I move, for nothing frightens me
except that sun which has Love's living rays.

I move and sing (O unwise thoughts of mine!)
of her the heavens cannot keep me from;
she's in my eyes; with her I seem to see
ladies and maidens that are firs and beeches.

I seem to hear her, hearing branch and breeze
and leaves and birds lamenting, and the murmur
of water that is fleeing through green grass.

Rarely has silence or the lonely chill
of shady forest ever pleased me more—
though too much of my sun is lost therein.

177

Mille piagge in un giorno et mille rivi
mostrato m'à per la famosa Ardenna
Amor, ch' a' suoi le piante e i cori impenna
per fargli al terzo ciel volando ir vivi.

Dolce m'è sol, senz' arme esser stato ivi
dove armato fier Marte et non acenna,
quasi senza governo et senza antenna
legno in mar, pien di penser gravi et schivi.

Pur giunto al fin de la giornata oscura,
rimembrando ond' io vegno et con quai piume,
sento di troppo ardir nascer paura;

ma 'l bel paese e 'l dilettoso fiume
con serena accoglienza rassecura
il cor già vòlto ov' abita il suo lume.

178

Amor mi sprona in un tempo et affrena,
assecura et spaventa, arde et agghiaccia,
gradisce et sdegna, a sé mi chiama et scaccia,
or mi tene in speranza et or in pena,

or alto or basso il meo cor lasso mena;
onde 'l vago desir perde la traccia
e 'l suo sommo piacer par che li spiaccia,
d'error sì novo la mia mente è piena.

Un amico penser le mostra il vado
(non d'acqua che per gli occhi si resolva)
da gir tosto ove spera esser contenta;

poi quasi maggior forza indi la svolva,
conven ch' altra via segua et mal suo grado
a la sua lunga et mia morte consenta.

177

A thousand slopes and rivers Love has shown me
throughout the famous Ardennes in one day,
for he wings hearts and feet of his devoted
to make them fly alive to the third heaven.

I found it sweet to be there all alone
unarmed, where armed Mars strikes without a warning;
a ship at sea without a mast and tiller
I was, and full of heavy, secret thoughts.

Still, having reached the end of the dark day
recalling where I'd been and with what wings,
I feel the fear born from excessive daring;

but the fair country and delightful river
with the brightness of their welcome reassure
my heart already turned to its light's home.

178

Love spurs and holds me back at the same time,
frightens and reassures, freezes and burns,
is kind and rude; he calls me, throws me out;
with hope he holds me now and then with grief,

now high now low he leads my weary heart;
so wavering desire loses track
and seems displeased by its own highest pleasure—
my mind is full of such strange opposition.

A thought that's friendly shows the mind the way
(not one of water pouring from the eyes)
to quickly go where it has hopes of joy;

but then, as if swayed by some greater force,
it's forced to go another way, and against
its will consent to its long death and mine.

179

Geri, quando talor meco s'adira
la mia dolce nemica ch' è sì altera,
un conforto m'è dato ch' i' non pera,
solo per cui vertù l'alma respira: 4

ovunque ella sdegnando li occhi gira,
che di luce privar mia vita spera,
le mostro i miei pien d'umiltà sì vera
ch' a forza ogni suo sdegno indietro tira. 8

E ciò non fusse, andrei non altramente
a veder lei che 'l volto di Medusa,
che facea marmo diventar la gente. 11

Così dunque fa' tu; ch' i' veggio esclusa
ogni altra aita, e 'l fuggir val niente
dinanzi a l'ali che 'l signor nostro usa. 14

180

Po, ben puo' tu portartene la scorza
di me con tue possenti et rapide onde,
ma lo spirto ch' iv' entro si nasconde
non cura né di tua né d'altrui forza; 4

lo qual, senz' alternar poggia con orza,
dritto per l'aure, al suo desir seconde
battendo l'ali, verso l'aurea fronde
l'acqua e 'l vento e la vela e i remi sforza. 8

Re degli altri, superbo altero fiume
che 'ncontri 'l sol quando e' ne mena 'l giorno
e 'n ponente abandoni un più bel lume: 11

tu te ne vai col mio mortal sul corno;
l'altro, coverto d'amorose piume,
torna volando al suo dolce soggiorno. 14

179

Geri, at times when my sweet enemy
who is so proud becomes upset with me,
there is one comfort keeping me from death—
the only strength that gives breath to my soul:

wherever she in anger turns her eyes
with hopes of cutting short my life of light,
I show her mine full of humility,
and she is forced to draw back her disdain.

Were this not so, my going to behold her
would be like looking at Medusa's face,
which turned a person's body into stone.

You do the same; I see all other help
excluded, and to run away is useless
against the kind of wings that our Lord has.

180

Po, you may well transport my outer shell
with you upon your strong and rapid waves,
but my own spirit that is hidden there
does not fear yours or anybody's power;

my spirit, without tacking port and starboard,
straight to the breeze and toward the golden leaves,
beating the wings that favor his desire,
resists the current, wind and sail and oars.

King over others, proud and haughty river,
who meets the sun when he brings us the day,
and leaves a light more lovely in the west,

you carry on your horn my mortal part;
the rest of me, covered with plumes of love,
flies back to be in his sweet dwelling place.

181

Amor fra l'erbe una leggiadra rete
d'oro e di perle tese sott' un ramo
dell'arbor sempre verde ch' i' tant' amo,
ben che n'abbia ombre più triste che liete. 4

L'esca fu 'l seme ch' egli sparge et miete
dolce et acerbo, ch' i' pavento et bramo;
le note non fur mai, dal dì ch' Adamo
aperse gli occhi, sì soavi et quete; 8

e 'l chiaro lume che sparir fa 'l sole
folgorava dintorno, e 'l fune avolto
era a la man ch' avorio et neve avanza. 11

Così caddi a la rete, et qui m'àn colto
gli atti vaghi et l'angeliche parole
e 'l piacer e 'l desire et la speranza. 14

182

Amor che 'ncende il cor d'ardente zelo
di gelata paura il ten costretto;
et qual sia più fa dubbio a l'intelletto
la speranza o 'l temor, la fiamma o 'l gelo. 4

Trem' al più caldo, ard' al più freddo cielo,
sempre pien di desire et di sospetto
pur come donna in un vestire schietto
celi un uom vivo, o sotto un picciol velo. 8

Di queste pene è mia propia la prima,
arder dì et notte; et quanto è 'l dolce male
né 'n penser cape, non che 'n versi o 'n rima; 11

l'altra non già, che 'l mio bel foco è tale
ch' ogni uom pareggia, et del suo lume in cima
chi volar pensa indarno spiega l'ale. 14

181

Love set amid the grass his pretty net
of gold and pearls, spread out beneath a branch
of that tree, ever green, I love so much,
though it gives shade of sadness more than joy.

The bait was that same seed he sows and reaps,
the sweet and bitter which I fear and yearn for;
the call was never, since the day that Adam
opened his eyes, more soft or gently sung.

And the bright light that makes the sunlight fade
was lightening all around; the rope was wrapped
around the hand that outdoes snow and ivory.

I fell into the net and I was captured
by charming gestures, by angelic words,
by pleasure and desire, and by hope.

182

Love that lights up the heart with flaming zeal,
with icy fear has a tight hold on it;
he makes the mind uncertain which is greater,
the hope or is it fear, the flame or frost.

It shivers when it's hottest, burns when coldest,
full of desire, always, full of fear,
as if a lady hid a living man
beneath her simple dress or little veil.

Of these two pains the first is mine, to burn
both day and night; no thought can grasp how great
is my sweet sickness, nor can verse or rhyme;

the other not, for my fair flame considers
all men alike, and one who thinks of flying
above her light has spread his wings in vain.

183

Se 'l dolce sguardo di costei m'ancide
et le soavi parolette accorte,
et s' Amor sopra me la fa sì forte
sol quando parla o ver quando sorride, 4

lasso, che fia se forse ella divide—
o per mia colpa o per malvagia sorte—
gli occhi suoi da mercé, sì che di morte
là dove or m'assicura allor mi sfide? 8

Però s' i' tremo et vo col cor gelato
qualor veggio cangiata sua figura,
questo temer d'antiche prove è nato: 11

femina è cosa mobile per natura,
ond' io so ben ch' un amoroso stato
in cor di donna picciol tempo dura. 14

184

Amor, Natura et la bella alma umile
ov' ogn' alta vertute alberga et regna
contra me son giurati: Amor s'ingegna
ch' i' mora a fatto e 'n ciò segue suo stile; 4

Natura ten costei d'un sì gentile
laccio che nullo sforzo è che sostegna;
ella è sì schiva ch' abitar non degna
più ne la vita faticosa et vile. 8

Così lo spirto d'or in or ven meno
a quelle belle care membra oneste
che specchio eran di vera leggiadria; 11

et s' a Morte Pietà non stringe 'l freno,
lasso, ben veggio in che stato son queste
vane speranze ond' io viver solia. 14

183

If that sweet glance of hers can make me die
as can those gentle, pointed words of hers,
if Love gives her such power over me
even when she speaks, or only if she smiles,

grief, what would happen if she were, perhaps—
through my own fault or some bad luck—to cut
the pity from her eyes, threatening me
with death there where till now she reassures me?

So if I tremble with a heart of ice
whenever I see her expression change,
my fear is born from long experience:

a woman is by nature changeable;
and I am well aware that love's condition
lasts little time within a lady's heart.

184

Nature and Love and the fair, humble soul
in which all lofty virtue dwells and reigns
have all conspired against me: Love contrives
to truly make me die, as is his fashion;

nature holds that soul with thread so tender
that it cannot sustain the slightest force;
she is so shy that she no longer deigns
to live this life so wearisome and vile.

And so the breath of life is slowly fading
within those worthy, cherished, lovely limbs
that were the mirror of true graciousness;

if Pity does not stop the course of Death,
alas, how well I see the state of these
vain hopes I have been used to living on.

185

Questa fenice de l'aurata piuma
al suo bel collo candido gentile
forma senz' arte un sì caro monile
ch' ogni cor addolcisce e 'l mio consuma; 4

forma un diadema natural ch' alluma
l'aere dintorno, et 'l tacito focile
d'Amor tragge indi un liquido sottile
foco che m'arde a la più algente bruma. 8

Purpurea vesta d'un ceruleo lembo
sparso di rose i belli omeri vela,
novo abito et bellezza unica et sola! 11

Fama ne l'odorato et ricco grembo
d'arabi monti lei ripone et cela,
che per lo nostro ciel sì altera vola. 14

186

Se Virgilio et Omero avessin visto
quel sole il qual vegg' io con gli occhi miei,
tutte lor forze in dar fama a costei
avrian posto et l'un stil coll'altro misto; 4

di che sarebbe Enea turbato, et tristo
Achille, Ulisse et gli altri semidei,
et quel che resse anni cinquantasei
sì bene il mondo, et quel ch' ancise Egisto. 8

Quel fiore antico di vertuti et d'arme,
come sembiante stella ebbe con questo
novo fior d'onestate et di bellezze! 11

Ennio di quel cantò ruvido carme,
di quest 'altro io, et o, pur non molesto
gli sia il mio ingegno e 'l mio lodar non sprezze! 14

185

This phoenix with the feathers made of gold,
around her lovely, pure white, gracious neck
forms naturally a necklace that's so precious
it sweetens every heart, but mine consumes;

she forms a natural diadem that lights
the air around it; and the silent flint
of Love extracts from it a subtle liquid
fire that makes me burn when it is coldest.

A purple gown all bordered with sky blue
sprinkled with roses veils her lovely shoulders:
new dress, beauty unique that stands alone!

Fame has her hidden in the rich and fragrant
bosom of the mountains of Arabia,
but she in majesty flies through our skies.

186

If Virgil and if Homer could have seen
that sun, the one I see with my own eyes,
they would have joined their forces to give fame
to her by mixing their two styles in one;

this would have made Aeneas sad, and troubled
Achilles, Ulysses, and the other demigods,
and him who ruled for fifty and six years
the world so well, and him Aegisthus killed.

That ancient flower of virtue and of arms,
how similar was his star of fate to this
new flower of all honesty and beauty!

Ennius sang of him in verse that's rough,
and I of her, and, oh, I hope my wit
will please her and that she not hate my praises!

187

Giunto Alessandro a la famosa tomba
del fero Achille, sospirando disse:
"O fortunato che sì chiara tromba
trovasti et chi di te sì alto scrisse!" 4

Ma questa pura et candida colomba
a cui non so s' al mondo mai par visse
nel mio stil frale assai poco rimbomba.
Così son le sue sorti a ciascun fisse; 8

ché d'Omero dignissima e d'Orfeo
o del pastor ch' ancor Mantova onora,
ch' andassen sempre lei sola cantando, 11

stella difforme et fato sol qui reo
commise a tal che 'l suo bel nome adora
ma forse scema sue lode parlando. 14

188

Almo sol, quella fronde ch' io sola amo
tu prima amasti, or sola al bel soggiorno
verdeggia et senza par poi che l'adorno
suo male et nostro vide in prima Adamo. 4

Stiamo a mirarla, i' ti pur prego et chiamo,
o sole; et tu pur fuggi et fai dintorno
ombrare i poggi et te ne porti il giorno,
et fuggendo mi tòi quel ch' i' più bramo. 8

L'ombra che cade da quell'umil colle
ove favilla il mio soave foco,
ove 'l gran lauro fu picciola verga, 11

crescendo mentr' io parlo, agli occhi tolle
la dolce vista del beato loco
ove 'l mio cor con la sua donna alberga. 14

187

When Alexander reached the famous tomb
of fierce Achilles, sighing he announced:
“Fortunate one, who found so clear a trumpet
and one who wrote so loftily of you!”

But this immaculate and pure white dove
whose equal, I think, never walked this earth,
in these frail words of mine resounds too little—
and so the destiny of each is fixed;

of Homer she’s most worthy and of Orpheus
and of the shepherd Mantua still honors,
that they sing only constantly of her,

but star deformed and fate—their only error—
gave her to one who loves her lovely name
but mars, perhaps, her praise in poetry.

188

Sustaining sun, that branch alone I love
and you first loved, alone in her sweet home
now flourishes, unrivaled, since the time
Adam first saw his own and our fair fall.

Let’s stay to gaze at her, I beg of you,
O sun; but still you flee and cast your shade
on every hillside carrying off the day,
and in your flight you take what I most yearn for.

The shadow falling from that low hillside
there where my gentle fire was a spark,
where the great laurel was a little sapling,

growing as I speak, takes from my eyes
the lovely sight of that place which is blessed
and where my heart is dwelling with his lady.

189

Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio
per aspro mare a mezza notte il verno
enfra Scilla et Caribdi, et al governo
siede 'l signore anzi 'l nimico mio; 4

à ciascun remo un penser pronto et rio
che la tempesta e 'l fin par ch' abbi a scherno;
la vela rompe un vento umido eterno
di sospir, di speranze et di desio; 8

pioggia di lagrimar, nebbia di sdegni
bagna et rallenta le già stanche sarte
che son d'error con ignoranzia attorto. 11

Celansi i duo mei dolci usati segni,
morta fra l'onde è la ragion et l'arte
tal ch' incomincio a desperar del porto. 14

190

Una candida cerva sopra l'erba
verde m'apparve con duo corna d'oro,
fra due riviere all'ombra d'un alloro,
levando 'l sole a la stagione acerba. 4

Era sua vista sì dolce superba
ch' i' lasciai per seguirla ogni lavoro,
come l'avaro che 'n cercar tesoro
con diletto l'affanno disacerba. 8

"Nessun mi tocchi," al bel collo d'intorno
scritto avea di diamanti et di topazi.
"Libera farmi al mio Cesare parve." 11

Et era 'l sol già vòlto al mezzo giorno,
gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar, non sazi,
quand' io caddi ne l'acqua et ella sparve. 14

189

My ship full of forgetful cargo sails
through rough seas at the midnight of a winter
between Charybdis and the Scylla reef,
my master, no, my foe, is at the helm;

at each oar sits a quick and insane thought
that seems to scorn the storm and what it brings;
the sail, by wet eternal winds of sighs,
of hopes and of desires blowing, breaks;

a rain of tears, a mist of my disdain
washes and frees those all too weary ropes
made up of wrong entwined with ignorance.

Hidden are those two trusty signs of mine;
dead in the waves is reason as is skill,
and I despair of ever reaching port.

190

A doe of purest white upon green grass
wearing two horns of gold appeared to me
between two streams beneath a laurel's shade
at sunrise in that season not yet ripe.

The sight of her was so sweetly austere
that I left all my work to follow her,
just like a miser who in search of treasure
with pleasure makes his effort bitterless.

"No one touch me," around her lovely neck
was written out in diamonds, and in topaz:
"It pleased my Caesar to create me free."

The sun by now had climbed the sky midway,
my eyes were tired but not full from looking
when I fell in the water and she vanished.

191

Sì come eterna vita è veder Dio
né più si brama né brama più lice,
così me, Donna, il voi veder felice
fa in questo breve et fraile viver mio. 4

Né voi stessa com' or bella vid' io
giamai, se vero al cor l'occhio ridice,
dolce del mio penser ora beatrice
che vince ogni alta speme, ogni desio! 8

Et se non fusse il suo fuggir sì ratto,
più non demanderei; ché s' alcun vive
sol d'odore et tal fama fede acquista, 11

alcun d'acqua o di foco, e 'l gusto e 'l tatto
acquetan cose d'ogni dolzor prive,
i' perché non de la vostra alma vista? 14

192

Stiamo, Amor, a veder la gloria nostra,
cose sopra Natura altere et nove.
Vedi ben quanta in lei dolcezza piove,
vedi lume che 'l Cielo in terra mostra; 4

vedi quant'arte dora e 'mperla e 'nostra
l'abito eletto et mai non visto altrove,
che dolcemente i piedi et gli occhi move
per questa di bei colli ombrosa chiostra! 8

L'erbetta verde e i fior di color mille
sparsi sotto quell'elce antiqua et negra
pregan pur che 'l bel pe' li prema o tocchi, 11

e 'l ciel di vaghe et lucide faville
s'accende intorno e 'n vista si rallegra
d'esser fatto seren da sì belli occhi. 14

191

Just as eternal life is seeing God,
no greater wish is there nor wish more right,
so, lady, to behold you makes me happy
during this short and fragile life of mine.

I've never seen you look more beautiful
than now, if my eyes tell my heart the truth,
sweet time of day that blesses all my thoughts,
surpassing all high hope, every desire.

And were it not so quick to run away,
I would not ask for more; for if some live
on smell alone (and this has gained belief),

on water or on fire, their taste and touch
appeased by things deprived of every sweetness,
why cannot I on your sustaining sight?

192

Let us stay, Love, and gaze upon our glory
on high and wondrous things surpassing Nature.
Look well how much sweetness rains down on her,
you see the light that shows earth what is heaven;

see how much skill empearls and gilds and colors
that noble bearing never seen before,
which sweetly puts in motion feet and eyes
through shady cloisters of these lovely hills.

Green grass and flowers of a thousand colors
scattered beneath that oak ancient and black
beg for her lovely feet to touch or press them;

and all the sky with bright and loving sparks
is set ablaze and visibly rejoices
to have been made serene by eyes so lovely.

193

Pasco la mente d'un sì nobil cibo
ch' ambrosia et nettar non invidio a Giove,
ché sol mirando, oblio ne l'alma piove
d'ogni altro dolce, et Lete al fondo bibo. 4

Talor ch' odo dir cose e 'n cor describo
per che da sospirar sempre ritrove,
ratto per man d'Amor (né so ben dove)
doppia dolcezza in un volto delibo; 8

ché quella voce infin al ciel gradita
suona in parole sì leggiadre et care
che pensar nol poria chi non l'à udita. 11

Allor inseme in men d'un palmo appare
visibilmente quanto in questa vita
Arte, Ingegno, et Natura e 'l Ciel po fare. 14

194

L'aura gentil che rasserena i poggi,
destando i fior per questo ombroso bosco,
al soave suo spirto riconosco
per cui conven che 'n pena e 'n fama poggi. 4

Per ritrovar ove 'l cor lasso appoggi,
fuggo dal mi' natio dolce aere tosco;
per far lume al penser torbido et fosco
cerco 'l mio sole et spero vederlo oggi; 8

nel qual provo dolcezze tante et tali
ch' Amor per forza a lui mi riconduce,
poi sì m'abbaglia che 'l fuggir m'è tardo. 11

I' chiedrei a scampar non arme, anzi ali,
ma perir mi dà 'l ciel per questa luce,
ché da lunge mi struggo et da presso ardo. 14

193

My mind is nourished by a food so noble
I do not envy Jove his sweet ambrosia:
just seeing her my soul rains with oblivion
of other sweetness—I drink up all of Lethe.

When I hear things I write them in my heart
to have them always there to sigh about;
rapt by the hand of Love, I know not where,
I taste a double sweetness at one time:

that voice which pleases even high as Heaven
resounds in words so charming and so cherished,
who has not heard it cannot understand.

Then all together, in less than a span,
appears to sight all that which in this life
Nature and Art, Heaven and Wit can do.

194

The gracious breeze that clears the hills again
awakening flowers through this shady woods,
I recognize by its soft flowing breath,
which makes me rise in labor and in fame.

To find a place to lean my weary heart
I flee my sweet and native Tuscan air;
to give light to my dark and turbid thought
I seek and hope to see my sun today;

in it I find so much and such a sweetness
that Love is forced to lead me back to her,
and then she dazzles me, and fleeing is slow.

Not arms but wings I would need to escape,
but Heaven would have me perish in this light;
I suffer when I'm far and burn when close.

195

Di dì in dì vo cangiando il viso e 'l pelo,
né però smorso i dolci inescati ami
né sbranco i verdi et invescati rami
de l'arbor che né sol cura né gelo. 4

Senz' acqua il mare et senza stelle il cielo
fia innanzi ch' io non sempre tema et brami
la sua bell'ombra, et ch' i' non odi' et ami
l'alta piaga amorosa che mal celo. 8

Non spero del mio affanno aver mai posa
infin ch' i' mi disosso et snervo et spolpo,
o la nemica mia pietà n'avesse. 11

Esser po in prima ogni impossibil cosa
ch' altri che Morte od ella sani 'l colpo
ch' Amor co' suoi belli occhi al cor m'impresse. 14

196

L'aura serena che fra verdi fronde
mormorando a ferir nel volto viemme
fammi risovenir quand' Amor diemme
le prime piaghe sì dolci profonde, 4

e 'l bel viso veder ch' altri m'asconde,
che sdegno o gelosia celato tiemme,
et le chiome, or avolte in perle e 'n gemme,
allora sciolte et sovra or terso bionde, 8

le quali ella spargea sì dolcemente
et raccogliea con sì leggiadri modi
che ripensando ancor trema la mente. 11

Torsele il tempo poi in più saldi nodi
et strinse 'l cor d'un laccio sì possente
che Morte sola fia ch' indi lo snodi. 14

195

From day to day my face and hair are changing,
but I still bite the sweetly baited hook
and hold tight to the green and enlimed branches
of the tree that has no care of cold or heat.

The sea will lose its water, sky its stars
before I fear no longer and desire
her lovely shade, and I not love and hate
the deep and loving wound I hide so badly.

I do not hope to ever rest my labors
until I am deboned, defleshed, demuscled,
or till my enemy shows me her pity.

All things that cannot be will be before
another or she or Death will heal the wound
that Love with her fair eyes made in my heart.

196

The tranquil aura that comes murmuring
through the green leaves and strikes against my brow
makes me remember when Love gave to me
for the first time his wounds so sweet and deep,

and lets me see the lovely face she hides
which jealousy or anger keeps from me,
and her hair, gathered now in pearls and gems
and flowing then more blonde than furbished gold,

which she was wont to loosen with such sweetness
and gather up again so charmingly—
that thinking of it makes my mind still tremble.

Then in still tighter knots time wound her hair
and bound my heart with cord that is so strong
that only Death can free it from such ties.

197

L'aura celeste che 'n quel verde lauro
spira ov' Amor ferì nel fianco Apollo
et a me pose un dolce giogo al collo,
tal che mia libertà tardi restauro, 4

po quello in me che nel gran vecchio mauro
Medusa quando in selce transformollo;
né posso dal bel nodo omai dar crollo
là 've il sol perde, non pur l'ambra o l'auro, 8

dico le chiome bionde e 'l crespo laccio
che sì soavemente lega et stringe
l'alma, che d'umiltate et non d'altro armo. 11

L'ombra sua sola fa 'l mio cor un ghiaccio
et di bianca paura il viso tinge,
ma gli occhi ànno vertù di farne un marmo. 14

198

L'aura soave al sole spiega et vibra
l'auro ch' Amor di sua man fila et tesse;
là da' belli occhi et de le chiome stesse
lega 'l cor lasso e i lievi spirti cribra. 4

Non ò medolla in osso o sangue in fibra
ch' i' non senta tremar pur ch' i' m'apresse
dove è chi morte et vita inseme, spesse
volte, in frale bilancia appende et libra, 8

vedendo ardere i lumi ond' io m'accendo,
et folgorare i nodi ond' io son preso
or su l'omero destro et or sul manco. 11

I' nol posso ridir, ché nol comprendo,
da ta' due luci è l'intelletto offeso
et di tanta dolcezza oppresso et stanco. 14

197

The heavenly aura breathing in that green laurel
where Love wounded Apollo in his side,
and placed a yoke of sweetness on my neck
from which it is too late to free myself,

has power like Medusa's when the old
and famous Moor she transformed into rock;
nor can I now break loose the lovely knot
which gold and amber and the sun surpasses:

I mean her golden hair, the curly snare
that with such softness binds and tightens round
my soul armed only with humility.

Her shadow is enough to turn my heart
to ice and tinge my face with whitened fear—
her eyes, however, can turn them into marble.

198

The gentle aura spreads and waves in sunlight
the gold Love spins and weaves with his own hands;
there with her lovely eyes and hair she binds
my weary heart and lifts my vital spirits.

The marrow of my bones, my blood's own fiber
all tremble just to come into the presence
of one who often weighs and balances
my life and death upon a fragile scale,

to see those lights that burn and make me burn
and those locks which have bound me, shimmering
on her right shoulder now, then on her left.

I can't explain, I cannot comprehend,
my mind is struck by two such lights as these
and wearied and oppressed by so much sweetness.

199

O bella man che mi destringi 'l core
e 'n poco spazio la mia vita chiudi,
man ov' ogni arte et tutti loro studi
poser Natura e 'l Ciel per farsi onore,

di cinque perle oriental colore,
et sol ne le mie piaghe acerbi et crudi,
diti schietti soavi, a tempo ignudi
consente or voi per arricchirme Amore.

Candido leggiadretto et caro guanto
che copria netto avorio et fresche rose:
chi vide al mondo mai sì dolci spoglie?

Così avess' io del bel velo altrettanto!
O inconstanzia de l'umane cose,
pur questo è furto, et vien chi me ne spoglie.

200

Non pur quell'una bella ignuda mano
che con grave mio danno si riveste,
ma l'altra et le duo braccia accorte et preste
son a stringere il cor timido et piano.

Lacci Amor mille, et nesun tende invano
fra quelle vaghe nove forme oneste
ch' adornan sì l'alto abito celeste
ch' agiunger nol po stil né 'ngegno umano:

li occhi sereni et le stellanti ciglia,
la bella bocca angelica di perle
piena et di rose, et di dolci parole

che fanno altrui tremar di meraviglia,
et la fronte, et le chiome ch' a vederle
di state a mezzo dì vincono il sole.

199

O lovely hand that squeezes my heart tight,
enclosing in so little space my life,
hand upon which all art and care was spent
by Nature and by Heaven for its praise,

with your five pearls of oriental hue
whose only bitter cruelness is to wound me,
those fingers long and soft which naked now
luckily Love shows me for my enrichment.

Pure white and gaily light, dear glove
that covers polished ivory and fresh roses,
who ever saw on earth such gracious spoils?

Would that I had as much of her fair veil!
O the inconstancy of human things!
But this is theft, and must be taken back.

200

Not only that one lovely, naked hand
that clothes itself again to my deep sorrow
but the other, too, and those two arms, are ready
and swift to squeeze my meek and humble heart.

A thousand snares Love sets, and none in vain,
among those charming, new, and honest forms
adorning so her high and heavenly bearing
that human style and genius cannot reach it:

her tranquil eyes, her eyebrows lit by stars,
her mouth, angelic, beautiful, and full
of pearls and roses and sweetness of words

that make a person tremble in amazement,
and then her forehead and her hair which seen
in summer at high noon put out the sun.

201

Mia ventura et Amor m'avean sì adorno
d'un bello aurato et serico trapunto,
ch' al sommo del mio ben quasi era aggiunto
pensando meco: "A chi fu quest' intorno!" 4

Né mi riede a la mente mai quel giorno
che mi fe' ricco et povero in un punto
ch' i' non sia d'ira et di dolor compunto,
pien di vergogna et d'amoroso scorno 8

che la mia nobil preda non più stretta
tenni al bisogno et non fui più costante
contra lo sforzo sol d'un'angioletta, 11

o, fuggendo, ale non giunsi a le piante
per far almen di quella man vendetta
che de li occhi mi trae lagrime tante. 14

202

D'un bel chiaro polito et vivo ghiaccio
move la fiamma che m'incende et strugge,
et sì le vene e 'l cor m'asciuga et sugge
che 'nvisibilemente i' mi disfaccio. 4

Morte, già per ferire alzato 'l braccio,
come irato ciel tona o leon rugge
va perseguendo mia vita che fugge,
et io pien di paura tremo et taccio. 8

Ben poria ancor pietà con amor mista
per sostegno di me, doppia colonna,
porsi fra l'alma stanca e 'l mortal colpo; 11

ma io nol credo, né 'l conosco in vista
di quella dolce mia nemica et donna;
né di ciò lei ma mia ventura incolpo. 14

201

Love and my own good fortune had so blessed me
with that embroidery of silk and gold
that I was near the summit of my joy
as I said to myself: "Think who has worn this!"

Nor does that day ever return to mind
that made me rich and poor at the same time
that I'm not moved by anger and by grief,
full of my shame and of my amorous scorn

that I did not hold tighter, as I should,
to my noble spoils and that I was not firmer
against the strength of just one little angel,

or, fleeing, did not add wings to my feet,
and so at least take vengeance on the hand
that draws out of my eyes so many tears.

202

From lovely, polished, clear and living ice
there moves the flame that melts and kindles me
and dries and drains my heart and veins so much
that I am perishing invisibly.

Death, with his arm already raised to strike,
like angry, thundering skies or lion that roars,
insistently pursues my life that flees,
and I in silence tremble full of fear.

But pity mixed with love could still be placed
like double columns in support of me
between my weary soul and that deathblow;

but I don't think it will nor do I see it
on that sweet lady's face, my enemy,
and I do not blame her for it, but fate.

203

Lasso, ch' i' ardo et altri non mel crede,
sì crede ogni uom se non sola colei
ch' è sovr' ogni altra et ch' i' sola vorrei:
ella non par che 'l creda, et sì sel vede.

Infinita bellezza et poca fede:
non vedete voi 'l cor nelli occhi mei?
Se non fusse mia stella, i' pur devrei
al fonte di pietà trovar mercede.

Quest' arder mio di che vi cal sì poco
e i vostri onori in mie rime diffusi
ne porian infiammar fors' ancor mille,

ch' i' veggio nel penser, dolce mio foco,
fredda una lingua et duo belli occhi chiusi
rimaner dopo noi pien di faville.

204

Anima che diverse cose tante
vedi, odi et leggi, et parli et scrivi et pensi:
occhi miei vaghi, et tu fra li altri sensi
che scorgi al cor l'alte parole sante:

per quanto non vorreste o poscia od ante
esser giunti al camin che sì mal tiensi,
per non trovarvi i duo bei lumi accensi
né l'orme impresse de l'amate piante?

Or con sì chiara luce et con tai segni
errar non dèsi in quel breve viaggio
che ne po far d'eterno albergo degni;

sforzati al cielo, o mio stanco coraggio,
per la nebbia entro de' suoi dolci sdegni
seguendo i passi onesti e 'l divo raggio.

203

Alas, I burn but she cannot believe it,
and everyone believes except the one
I would, above all others, have believe;
she seems not to believe and yet she sees it.

Unending beauty of such little faith,
can you not see my heart within my eyes?
Were it not for my star, I surely would
find mercy at the fountain of your pity.

The way I burn, for which you care so little
and all your praise diffused in all my verse
could yet inflame perhaps a thousand others,

for in my thoughts I see, O my sweet fire,
once cold my tongue, once closed your lovely eyes
still full of sparks will be when we have gone.

204

My soul that sees so many different things,
that hears and reads and speaks and writes and thinks;
my wishful eyes, and you among the senses
who guides her holy words into my heart;

how much would you have liked to reach life's road
so badly traveled before she came or after
and not find there those two fair lights that shine
or footprints made by those beloved feet?

And now with such clear light and with such signs
we must not lose our way in that short journey
which can prepare us for our final home.

Now strive for Heaven, O my weary heart,
straight through the cloud of all her sweet disdains
behind her virtuous steps and light divine.

205

Dolci ire, dolci sdegni et dolci paci,
dolce mal, dolce affanno et dolce peso,
dolce parlare et dolcemente inteso,
or di dolce òra, or pien di dolci faci! 4

Alma, non ti lagnar ma soffra et taci,
et tempra il dolce amaro che n'à offeso
col dolce onor che d'amar quella ài preso
a cui io dissi: "Tu sola mi piaci." 8

Forse ancor fia chi sospirando dica,
tinto di dolce invidia: "Assai sostenne
per bellissimo amor quest' al suo tempo." 11

Altri: "O Fortuna agli occhi miei nemica!
perché non la vid' io? perché non venne
ella più tardi, o ver io più per tempo?" 14

206

S' i' 'l dissi mai, ch' i' vegna in odio a quella
del cui amor vivo et senza 'l qual morrei;
s' i' 'l dissi, che' miei dì sian pochi et rei
et di vil signoria l'anima ancella;
s' i' 'l dissi, contra me s'arme ogni stella,
et dal mio lato sia
paura et gelosia,
et la nemica mia
più feroce ver me sempre et più bella! 9

S' i' 'l dissi, Amor l'aurate sue quadrella
spenda in me tutte, et l'impiombate in lei;
s' i' 'l dissi, cielo et terra, uomini et Dei
mi sian contrari, et essa ogni or più fella;
s' i' 'l dissi, chi con sua cieca facella
dritto a morte m'invia
pur come suol si stia,

205

Sweet anger, sweet disdain, sweet times of peace,
sweet harm, sweet torment, and sweet weight,
sweet spoken words and sweetly understood,
now full of a sweet breeze, now sweetest sparks!

My soul, do not complain, suffer in silence
and temper the sweet bitterness that hurt us
with the sweet honor you gain loving her
to whom I said: "You are my only pleasure."

Perhaps someday, someone, sighing, will say
tinged with sweet envy: "How much this man
endured in life for this exquisite love."

Others: "O Fortune hostile to my eyes!
Why couldn't I have seen her? Why didn't she
come later on, or I come earlier?"

206

If ever I said it, then may she hate me
whose love I live by, without which I die;
if I said it, my days be few and painful,
my soul the minion of some vulgar lordship;
if I said it, may all stars turn against me
and on my side let be
both fear and jealousy
and may my enemy
be fiercer toward me always and more lovely.

If I said it, may Love use all his arrows,
the golden ones on me, on her the leaden;
if I said it, may Heaven and earth, all men
and gods oppose me and she become more cruel;
if I said it, may she who with blind torch
leads me straight to my death
remain as she has been,

né mai più dolce o pia
ver me si mostri in atto od in favella! 18

S' i' 'l dissi mai, di quel ch' i' men vorrei
piena trovi quest'aspra et breve via;
s' i' 'l dissi, il fero ardor che mi desvia
cresca in me quanto il fier ghiaccio in costei;
s' i' 'l dissi, unqua non veggian li occhi mei
sol chiaro o sua sorella,
né donna né donzella,
ma terribil procella
qual Faraone in perseguir li Ebrei! 27

S' i' 'l dissi, coi sospir quant' io mai fei
sia pietà per me morta et cortesia;
s' i' 'l dissi, il dir s'innaspri che s'udia
sì dolce allor che vinto mi rendei;
s' i' 'l dissi, io spiaccia a quella ch' i' torrei
sol chiuso in fosca cella,
dal dì che la mamella
lasciai fin che si svella
da me l'alma, adorar—forse e 'l farei! 36

Ma s' io nol dissi, chi sì dolce apria
meo cor a speme ne l'età novella
regg' ancor questa stanca navicella
col governo di sua pietà natia;
né diventi altra, ma pur qual solia
quando più non potei
(che me stesso perdei
né più perder devrei):
mal fa chi tanta fé sì tosto oblia. 45

I' nol dissi giamai, né dir poria
per oro o per cittadi o per castella;
vinca 'l ver dunque e si rimanga in sella,
e vinta a terra caggia la bugia!
Tu sai in me il tutto, Amor: s' ella ne spia
dinne quel che dir dei;
i' beato direi
tre volte e quattro e sei
chi devendo languir si morì pria. 54

not sweeter or more kind
toward me in how she acts or what she says.

If ever I said it, then may I find
this short, hard road full of my least desires;
if I said it, may my fierce flame misguiding
grow equal to the hard ice inside her;
if I said it, may my eyes never see
the sun clear nor his sister
nor damsel nor a lady,
but a storm full of terror
as Pharaoh saw when he pursued the Jews.

If I said it, with all the sighs I've breathed
may pity for me die, and courtesy;
if I said it, may words of hers turn bitter,
so sweet when I surrendered to her then;
if I said it, may she hate me who gladly,
alone and locked in darkness
from the first day I left
the breast till soul's uprooted,
I would adore—and I might just well do it.

But if I did not say it, may she who sweetly
opened my heart to hope when I was young
still steer this weary little bark of mine
with her own innate mercy at the tiller;
may she not change, but be what she was like
when I no longer could
resist and lost myself,
and have no more to lose:
to forget so soon such faithfulness is wrong.

I never said it, nor would I ever say it
not for the price of gold, cities, or castles;
so let truth conquer and hold to the saddle
and all those lies fall vanquished to the ground!
Love, you know all that's in me: if she asks,
then tell her what you must;
I'd say that he's more blessed,
three, four, and six times more
who dies before he has to languish first.

Per Rachel ò servito e non per Lia,
né con altra saprei
viver; e sosterrei,
quando 'l ciel ne rappella,
girmen con ella in sul carro de Elia. 59

207

Ben mi credea passar mio tempo omai
come passato avea quest'anni a dietro,
senz' altro studio et senza novi ingegni;
or poi che da Madonna i' non impetro
l'usata aita, a che condutto m'ài
tu 'l vedi, Amor, che tal arte m'insegni. 6
Non so s' i' me ne sdegni,
che 'n questa età mi fai divenir ladro
del bel lume leggiadro
senza 'l qual non vivrei in tanti affanni.
Così avess' io i primi anni
preso lo stil ch' or prender mi bisogna,
che 'n giovenil fallir è men vergogna. 13

Li occhi soavi ond' io soglio aver vita
de le divine lor alte bellezze
furmi in sul cominciar tanto cortesi,
che 'n guisa d'uom cui non proprie ricchezze
ma celato di for soccorso aita
vissimi, che né lor né altri offesi. 19
Or, ben ch' a me ne pesi,
divento ingiurioso et importuno;
ché 'l poverel digiuno
ven ad atto talor che 'n miglior stato
avria in altrui biasmato.
Se le man di pietà invidia m'à chiuse,
fame amorosa e 'l non poter mi scuse. 26

For Rachel I have served and not for Leah,
nor with another could
I live; and I'd endure,
if Heaven calls us back,
to go with her in Elijah's chariot.

207

I thought by now that I could live my life
as I have lived it during these past years,
without more study and new stratagems;
and now that I no longer have the help
I'm used to from my lady, you see, Love,
where you have led me teaching me such art.
It's hard not to be angry
that at my age you turn me to a thief
of that fair charming light
without which I would not live in great pain.
If I had only learned
in my first years the style I now must take,
for there's less shame in failing when you're young.

Those gentle eyes which were my source of life
were through their beauty lofty and divine
so very kind to me at the beginning,
that like a man, who not by his own riches
but from some hidden help that is external,
I lived, and I harmed neither them nor her.
Now, though it gives me pain
I have become annoying, tiresome;
for a poor, starving wretch
can do sometimes what in a better state
he would have blamed in others.
If pity's hand is closed to me by envy,
let loving hunger and no strength excuse me.

Ch' i' ò cercate già vie più di mille
per provar senza lor se mortal cosa
mi potesse tener in vita un giorno.
L'anima, poi ch' altrove non à posa,
corre pur a l'angeliche faville,
et io che son di cera al foco torno; 32
et pongo mente intorno
ove si fa men guardia a quel ch' i' bramo,
et come augel in ramo
ove men teme, ivi più tosto è colto,
così dal suo bel volto
l'involo or uno et or un altro sguardo,
et di ciò insieme mi nutrico et ardo. 39

Di mia morte mi pasco et vivo in fiamme,
stranio cibo et mirabil salamandra!
ma miracol non è, da tal si vole.
Felice agnello a la penosa mandra
mi giacqui un tempo; or a l'estremo famme
et Fortuna et Amor pur come sòle: 45
così rose et viole
à primavera, e 'l verno à neve et ghiaccio.
Però s' i' mi procaccio
quinci et quindi alimenti al viver curto,
se vol dir che sia furto,
sì ricca donna deve esser contenta
s' altri vive del suo, ch' ella nol senta. 52

Chi nol sa di ch' io vivo, et vissi sempre
dal dì che 'n prima que' belli occhi vidi
che mi fecer cangiar vita et costume?
Per cercar terra et mar da tutt' i lidi
chi po saver tutte l'umane tempre?
L'un vive, ecco, d'odor là sul gran fiume, 58
io qui di foco et lume
queto i frali et famelici mei spirti.
Amor (et vo' ben dirti),
disconvensi a signor l'esser sì parco.
Tu ài li strali et l'arco,
fa di tua man, non pur bramand', io mora;
ch' un bel morir tutta la vita onora. 65

I've searched more than a thousand ways by now
to see if there is any mortal thing
could keep me living just one day without them.
My soul which finds its rest no other place
keeps running still to those angelic sparks,
and I a man of wax, melt in the flame.
I look around to see
where what I most desire is least guarded,
and like a bird in branches
that's captured quicker where it's least afraid,
so from her lovely face
I steal first one and then another glance
and by them I'm both nourished and I burn.

I feed on my own death and live in flames,
a strange food and a wondrous salamander!
But it's no miracle—he wills it so.
A happy lamb within his sorry flock
I rested for awhile; now at the end
Fortune and Love treat me as they do others:
like violets and roses
come with the spring, and ice and snow in winter.
And so if here and there
I search for nourishment for my short life,
if she would call this theft,
so rich a lady ought to be content
to let one live on what she does not miss.

All know on what I live and always have
from that first day I saw those lovely eyes
that made me change my life and all my ways.
Search all the earth and sea on every shore—
who knows all of man's different temperaments?
There's one who lives by smell on the great river,
I, here, with light and fire
appease my fragile spirits that are starving.
Love (and I must say this)
such stinginess does not befit a lord!
You have the bow and arrows,
let me die by your hand and not from yearning,
for a good death can honor one's whole life.

Chiusa fiamma è più ardente, et se pur cresce,
in alcun modo più non po celarsi.
Amor, i' 'l so, che 'l provo a le tue mani.
Vedesti ben quando sì tacito arsi,
or de' miei gridi a me medesmo incresce,
che vo noiando et prossimi et lontani. 71
O mondo, o penser vani!
O mia forte ventura, a che m'adduce?
O di che vaga luce
al cor mi nacque la tenace speme
onde l'annoda et preme
quella che con tua forza al fin mi mena!
La colpa è vostra et mio 'l danno et la pena. 78

Così di ben amar porto tormento,
et del peccato altrui cheggio perdono—
anzi del mio, che devea torcer li occhi
dal troppo lume, et di sirene al suono
chiuder li orecchi, et ancor non men pento
che di dolce veleno il cor trabocchi. 84
Aspett' io pur che scocchi
l'ultimo colpo chi mi diede 'l primo;
et fia, s' i' dritto estimo,
un modo di pietate occider tosto,
non essendo ei disposto
a far altro di me che quel che soglia:
ché ben muor chi morendo esce di doglia. 91

Canzon mia, fermo in campo
starò, ch' elli è disnor morir fuggendo;
et me stesso reprendo
di tai lamenti, sì dolce è mia sorte,
pianto, sospiri et morte.
Servo d'Amor che queste rime leggi:
ben non à 'l mondo che 'l mio mal pareggi. 98

A hidden flame burns hottest; should it grow,
there is no way for it to stay concealed;
you know this, Love, since I am in your hands.
You saw it well when I burned in such silence;
now I myself regret those cries of mine,
for I've become a nuisance near and far.
O world, O thought in vain,
O my hard fortune, where are you taking me?
O from what lovely light
was that tenacious hope born in my heart
with which she knots and chokes it,
that one who with your power leads me to death!
The fault is yours, and mine the loss and pain.

And so from loving well I bear the pain,
and for another's sin I beg for pardon—
rather for mine, because I should have shut
my eyes from too much light and closed my ears
from siren song, but still I am not sorry
my heart is overflowing with sweet poison.
I wait for him who shot
the first to shoot the final shaft at me,
and it will be, if I
am right, the kind of pity quick to kill,
since he is not disposed
to treat me differently than in the past:
to die well is to die and leave the pain.

My song, I'll hold the field,
for it's dishonorable to die in flight;
and I reproach myself
for such laments; so sweet my destiny,
my tears and sighs, my death. Love's servant,
you who read my verses here,
the world has no good equal to my bad.

208

Rapido fiume, che d'alpestra vena
rodendo intorno (onde 'l tuo nome prendi)
notte et dì meco disioso scendi
ov' Amor me, te sol Natura mena:

vattene innanzi, il tuo corso non frena
né stanchezza né sonno; et pria che rendi
suo dritto al mar, fiso u' si mostri attendi
l'erba più verde et l'aria più serena.

Ivi è quel nostro vivo et dolce sole
ch' adorna e 'nfiora la tua riva manca;
forse (o che spero!) el mio tardar le dole.

Basciale 'l piede o la man bella et bianca;
dille e 'l basciar sie 'n vece di parole:
"Lo spirto è pronto, ma la carne è stanca."

209

I dolci colli ov' io lasciai me stesso,
partendo onde partir giamai non posso,
mi vanno innanzi, et emmi ogni or a dosso
quel caro peso ch' Amor m'à commesso.

Meco di me mi meraviglio spesso
ch' i' pur vo sempre, et non son ancor mosso
dal bel giogo più volte indarno scosso,
ma com' più me n'allungo et più m'appresso.

Et qual cervo ferito di saetta
col ferro avelenato dentr' al fianco
fugge et più duolsi quanto più s'affretta,

tal io, con quello stral dal lato manco
che mi consuma et parte mi diletta,
di duol mi struggo et di fuggir mi stanco.

208

Rapid river, coming from alpine source
gnawing (from which your name derives) your way,
who night and day with me descends in yearning
where Love leads me, and you by Nature only,

flow on ahead; your course is not impeded
by sleep or weariness; before you give the sea
its due, look closely where the grass appears
more green and where the air is more serene.

There is that sun of ours alive and sweet,
adorning, turning your left bank to flowers;
perhaps (oh what hope!) my slowness makes her grieve.

And kiss her foot or white and lovely hand;
tell her, and let your kiss be like your words:
"The spirit's ready, but the flesh is weak."

209

Those hills of sweetness where I left myself,
leaving the place which I can never leave,
are there before me, and behind me still
is that dear burden Love has given me.

And many times I am amazed to find
that though I move, I've still not moved away
from the fair yoke in vain I've often shaken—
the farther I go, the closer I become.

Just like a stag that's wounded by an arrow,
a poisoned piece of iron stuck in his side,
will flee and feel more pain the more it runs,

so I, with that shaft piercing my left side,
destroying me while giving me delight,
am pained with grief and tired from my running.

210

Non da l'ispano Ibero a l'indo Idaspe
ricercando del mar ogni pendice,
né dal lito vermiglio a l'onde caspe,
né 'n ciel né 'n terra è più d'una fenice. 4

Qual destro corvo o qual manca cornice
canti 'l mio fato, o qual Parca l'innaspe?
ché sol trovo pietà sorda com' aspe,
misero, onde sperava esser felice. 8

Ch' i' non vo' dir di lei, ma chi la scorge,
tutto 'l cor di dolcezza et d'amor gl'empie,
tanto n'à seco et tant' altrui ne porge. 11

Et per far mie dolcezze amare et empie,
o s'infinge o non cura o non s'accorge
del fiorir queste inanzi tempo tempie. 14

211

Voglia mi sprona, Amor mi guida et scorge,
Piacer mi tira, Usanza mi trasporta;
Speranza mi lusinga et riconforta
et la man destra al cor già stanco porge, 4

e 'l misero la prende et non s'accorge
di nostra cieca et disleale scorta;
regnano i sensi et la ragion è morta;
de l'un vago desio l'altro risorge. 8

Vertute, onor, bellezza, atto gentile,
dolci parole ai be' rami n'àn giunto
ove soavemente il cor s'invesca. 11

Mille trecento ventisette, a punto
su l'ora prima, il dì sesto d'aprile,
nel laberinto intrai, né veggio ond' esca. 14

210

Not from Spain's Ebro to India's Hydaspes,
though searching every slope into the sea,
not from the Red shore to the Caspian waves,
in Heaven, on earth, is there another phoenix.

What crow to right, what raven to my left
sings of my fate? What Sister Fate enspools it?
For me alone Pity is a deaf asp,
wretch that I am, where I hoped to find joy.

I will not speak of her; to see her, though,
fills up one's heart with sweetness and with love—
she has so much, so much she offers others.

To make the sweetness I feel cruel and bitter
she feigns, or does not care, or does not see
my temples flower white before their time.

211

Desire spurs me, Love sees and guides my way,
Pleasure pulls me, Habit carries me away,
Hope teases me, gives me encouragement;
to my tired heart it offers its right hand,

and the poor thing accepts it unaware
of how disloyal and blind our guide can be.
The senses reign, and reason now is dead;
from one pleasing desire comes another.

Virtue, honor, beauty, gracious bearing,
sweet words have caught me in her lovely branches
in which my heart is tenderly entangled.

In thirteen twenty-seven, and precisely
at the first hour of the sixth of April
I entered the labyrinth, and I see no way out.

212

Beato in sogno et di languir contento,
d'abbracciar l'ombre et seguir l'aura estiva,
nuoto per mar che non à fondo o riva;
solco onde, e 'n rena fondo, et scrivo in vento;

e 'l sol vagheggio si ch' elli à già spento
col suo splendor la mia vertù visiva;
et una cerva errante et fugitiva
caccio con un bue zoppo e 'nfermo et lento.

Cieco et stanco ad ogni altro ch' al mio danno,
il qual dì et notte palpitando cerco,
sol Amor et Madonna et Morte chiamo.

Così venti anni, grave et lungo affanno,
pur lagrime et sospiri et dolor merco:
in tale stella presi l'esca et l'amo!

213

Grazie ch' a pochi il Ciel largo destina,
rara vertù non già d'umana gente,
sotto biondi capei canuta mente
e 'n umil donna alta beltà divina,

leggiadria singulare et pellegrina
e 'l cantar che ne l'anima si sente,
l'andar celeste e 'l vago spirto ardente
ch' ogni dur rompe et ogni altezza inchina,

et que' belli occhi che i cor fanno smalti,
possenti a rischiarar abisso et notti
et torre l'alme a' corpi et darle altrui,

col dir pien d'intelletti dolci et alti,
coi sospiri soavemente rotti:
da questi magi transformato fui.

212

Blest in my dreams and satisfied to languish,
embrace shadows and chase a summer breeze,
I swim a sea that knows no depth or shore,
plow waves and build on sand and write in wind,

and I gaze at the sun whose splendor now
extinguishes the power of my sight;
and for a doe that wanders off and flees
I hunt with ox that's lame and sick and slow.

Weary and blind to all but my own harm,
which day and night I seek with trembling heart,
only for Love, Lady, and Death I call.

So twenty years of long and heavy labor
have won me only tears and sighs of sorrow—
under this star I took the bait and hook.

213

Those graces generous Heaven gives to few,
uncommon virtues, unknown in mankind,
beneath blond hair the wisdom of gray age,
beauty, divine and high in modest lady,

extraordinary charm, unusual,
and singing that is heard within the soul,
a heavenly walk, a loving spirit glowing,
breaking all hardness, making pride bend low,

those lovely eyes that turn all hearts to stone,
so strong they brighten night, light the abyss
and take a body's soul to give to others,

with speech all full of sweet and lofty insights,
with sighs that tenderly are interrupted:
by such magicians I had been transformed.

214

Anzi tre dì creata era alma in parte
da por sua cura in cose altere et nove
et dispregiar di quel ch' a' molti è 'n pregio;
quest' ancor dubbia del fatal suo corso,
sola pensando pargoletta et sciolta,
intrò di primavera in un bel bosco. 6

Era un tenero fior nato in quel bosco
il giorno avanti, et la radice in parte
ch' appressar nol poteva anima sciolta;
ché v'eran di lacciuo' forme sì nove,
et tal piacer precipitava al corso,
che perder libertate ivi era in pregio. 12

Caro, dolce, alto et faticoso pregio
che ratto mi volgesti al verde bosco,
usato di sviarne a mezzo 'l corso!
Et ò cerco poi 'l mondo a parte a parte
se versi o petre o suco d'erbe nove
mi rendesser un dì la mente sciolta. 18

Ma, lasso, or veggio che la carne sciolta
fia di quel nodo ond' è 'l suo maggior pregio
prima che medicine antiche o nove
saldin le piaghe ch' i' presi in quel bosco
folto di spine, ond' i' ò ben tal parte
che zoppo n'esco, e 'ntravi a sì gran corso! 24

Pien di lacci et di stecchi un duro corso
aggio a fornire, ove leggera et sciolta
pianta avrebbe uopo et sana d'ogni parte.
Ma tu, Signor, ch' ài di pietate il pregio,
porgimi la man destra in questo bosco,
vinca 'l tuo sol le mie tenebre nove. 30

Guarda 'l mio stato a le vaghezze nove
che 'nterrompendo di mia vita il corso
m'àn fatto abitador d'ombroso bosco;
rendimi, s' esser po, libera et sciolta
l'errante mia consorte, et fia tuo 'l pregio
s' ancor teco la trovo in miglior parte. 36

214

Three days ago a soul was put in place
where it could care for things lofty and new,
despising that which many people prize;
she, still uncertain of her fated course,
alone and thoughtful, innocent and free,
in springtime walked into a lovely wood.

A tender flower was born inside that wood
the day before, its root fixed in a place
that no soul could come near it and be free;
for there were snares there of a type so new,
and such great pleasure hastening one's course,
that losing freedom there was like a prize.

Dearest and sweet lofty, laborious prize,
that quickly made me turn to the green wood
and often makes us stray in our mid-course.
I later searched the world from place to place
for verses, stones, or juice of herb that's new,
that might someday make my mind once more free.

But now I see that my flesh will be free
from its own knot which is its greatest prize
before all medicines ancient or new
can heal the wound I got inside that wood
all thick with thorns, whereby it was my place
to come out lame, once entered with great course.

All full of snares and thorns is the hard course
I must complete, where a light foot that's free
is needed—one that's whole in every place.
But you, Lord, who possesses pity's prize,
give me your right hand here inside this wood,
let your sun win my shadow that is new.

Look at my state from beauty that is new,
which has, in interrupting my life's course,
made me a dweller of a shadowy wood;
give me, if it can be, unbound and free
my wandering consort; let yours be the prize
if I find her with you in a better place.

Or ecco in parte le question mie nove:
s' alcun pregio in me vive o 'n tutto è corso,
o l'alma sciolta o ritenuta al bosco. 39

215

In nobil sangue vita umile et queta,
et in alto intelletto un puro core,
frutto senile in sul giovenil fiore,
e 'n aspetto pensoso anima lieta 4

raccolto à 'n questa donna il suo pianeta—
anzi 'l Re de le stelle—e 'l vero onore,
le degne lode e 'l gran pregio e 'l valore
ch' è da stancar ogni divin poeta. 8

Amor s'è in lei con onestate aggiunto,
con beltà naturale, abito adorno
et un atto che parla con silenzio, 11

et non so che nelli occhi che 'n un punto
po far chiara la notte, oscuro il giorno,
e 'l mel amaro, et addolcir l'assenzio. 14

Now see in part my doubts all strangely new:
if some worth lives in me or ran its course,
if my soul's free or held back in the wood.

215

In noble blood a quiet, humble life,
and high intelligence in a pure heart,
wisdom of age in flower of its youth,
with thoughtful aspect in a happy soul,

in her this lady's planet has collected—
by King of stars, that is—and the true honor,
praises deserved, and the great worth, her value
enough to wear out any divine poet.

Love with her couples in her honesty,
with natural beauty and with gracious bearing,
with attitude that speaks out in its silence,

and something in her eyes which suddenly
can light the night and make the day turn dark,
make honey bitter and the wormwood sweet.

216

Tutto 'l dì piango; et poi la notte, quando
prendon riposo i miseri mortali,
trovomi in pianto et raddopiarsi i mali;
così spendo 'l mio tempo lagrimando.

In tristo umor vo li occhi consumando
e 'l cor in doglia; et son fra li animali
l'ultimo, sì che li amorosi strali
mi tengon ad ogni or di pace in bando.

Lasso, che pur da l'un a l'altro sole
et da l'una ombra a l'altra ò già 'l più corso
di questa morte che si chiama vita!

Più l'altrui fallo che 'l mi' mal mi dole,
ché pietà viva e 'l mio fido soccorso
vedem' arder nel foco et non m'aita.

217

Già desiai con sì giusta querela
e 'n sì fervide rime farmi udire
ch' un foco di pietà fessi sentire
al duro cor ch' a mezza state gela,

et l'empia nube che 'l rafredda et vela
rompesse a l'aura del mi' ardente dire,
o fessi quell'altrui in odio venire
che' belli (onde mi strugge) occhi mi cela.

Or non odio per lei, per me pietate
cerco; ché quel non vo', questo non posso,
tal fu mia stella et tal mia cruda sorte.

Ma canto la divina sua beltate
che quand' i' sia di questa carne scosso
sappia 'l mondo che dolce è la mia morte.

216

All day I weep; and then at nighttime when
all miserable mortals stop to rest
I find myself in tears, my pains have doubled:
and so all of my time I spend in weeping.

With their sad moisture I wear out my eyes,
with grief my heart; among all living things
I rank the worst, because those loving arrows
forever keep me exiled from my peace.

Alas, for from one sun until another,
from one night to the next, I have already
run through most of this death which is called life!

More for her fault I grieve than for my ills,
for living pity, the help I placed my faith in,
can see me burn in fire and give no aid.

217

I wanted once by means of just complaint
and in such fervid verse to raise my voice
and set pity aflame and make it felt
in the hard heart that's frozen in midsummer;

and break the cruel cloud cold and veiling it
with all the aura of my flaming words,
or make her hateful to all others, she
who hides those lovely eyes that make me melt.

Not hate for her, pity for me I seek;
I don't want hate, and pity I can't have;
such was my star, such my crude destiny.

But I shall sing of all her godlike beauty
so that when I am shaken from this flesh
the world will know how sweet a death was mine.

218

Tra quantunque leggiadre donne et belle
giunga costei ch' al mondo non à pare,
col suo bel viso suol dell'altre fare
quel che fa 'l dì de le minori stelle.

Amor par ch' a l'orecchie mi favelle,
dicendo: "Quanto questa in terra appare
fia 'l viver bello; et poi 'l vedrem turbare,
perir vertuti e 'l mio regno con elle.

"Come Natura al ciel la luna e 'l sole,
a l'aere i venti, a la terra erbe et fronde,
a l'uomo et l'intelletto et le parole,

"et al mar ritollesse i pesci et l'onde:
tanto et più fien le cose oscure et sole
se Morte li occhi suoi chiude et asconde."

219

Il cantar novo e 'l pianger delli augelli
in sul dì fanno retentir le valli,
e 'l mormorar de' liquidi cristalli
giù per lucidi freschi rivi et snelli.

Quella ch' à neve il volto, oro i capelli,
nel cui amor non fur mai inganni né falli,
destami al suon delli amorosi balli,
pettinando al suo vecchio i bianchi velli.

Così mi sveglio a salutar l'aurora
e 'l sol ch' è seco, et più l'altro ond' io fui
ne' primi anni abagliato et son ancora.

I' gli ò veduti alcun giorno ambedui
levarsi inseme, e 'n un punto e 'n un'ora
quel far le stelle et questo sparir lui.

218

However many lovely, charming ladies
she finds around her, she who has no equal,
with her fair face she makes of all the others
what daybreak makes of all the lesser stars.

It seems that Love is whispering in my ear,
saying: "As long as she is on this earth,
life will be good; and then we'll see it darkened
and virtues die and with them goes my realm.

If Nature took from the heavens sun and moon,
the wind from air, the grass and leaves from earth,
the intellect and words away from man,

and from the sea removed its fish and waves:
so much and more will things be dark, deserted,
were Death to come to close and hide her eyes."

219

The new song sung and weeping of the birds
at break of day is echoed in the valleys
as is the murmuring of liquid crystal
that flows down through the clear, fresh, rapid streams.

The one whose face is snow, whose hair is gold,
whose love contained no failings or deceit,
awakens me to sound of loving dance,
combing her lover's ancient fleece of white.

And so I wake to greet the dawn and sun
with her, and more that other sun which I
was dazzled by in youth and still am now.

Some days I've seen the two of them together
rising, and at the same time, instantly,
him make the stars, as she makes him, vanish.

220

Onde tolse Amor l'oro et di qual vena
per far due treccie bionde? e 'n quali spine
colse le rose, e 'n qual piaggia le brine
tenere e fresche, et die' lor polso et lena? 4

onde le perle in ch' ei frange et affrena
dolci parole oneste et pellegrine?
onde tante bellezze et sì divine
di quella fronte più che 'l ciel serena? 8

Da quali angeli mosse et di qual spera
quel celeste cantar che mi disface
sì che n'avanza omai da disfar poco? 11

Di qual sol nacque l'alma luce altera
di que' belli occhi ond' io ò guerra et pace,
che mi cuocono il cor in ghiaccio e 'n foco? 14

221

Qual mio destin, qual forza o qual inganno
mi riconduce disarmato al campo,
là 've sempre son vinto? et s' io ne scampo,
meraviglia n'avrò; s' i' moro, il danno. 4

Danno non già, ma pro, sì dolci stanno
nel mio cor le faville e 'l chiaro lampo
che l'abbaglia et lo strugge e 'n ch' io m'avampo,
et son già ardendo nel vigesimo anno. 8

Sento i messi di Morte ove apparire
veggio i belli occhi e folgorar da lunge;
poi s' aven ch' appressando a me li gire, 11

Amor con tal dolcezza m'unge et punge
ch' i' nol so ripensar, non che ridire,
ché né 'ngegno né lingua al vero agiunge. 14

220

Where did Love get the gold and from what mine
to make the two blond tresses? What thorns yielded
the roses, and what meadow gave its frost
tender and fresh, to grant them life and breath?

From where the pearls with which he breaks and tempers
sweet words so chaste, so extraordinary?
From where so many beauties so divine
upon that face more tranquil than the heavens?

And from what angels, from what sphere, did he
send that celestial singing that consumes me,
leaving little of me left to be consumed?

And from what sun was born the high, kind light
of those fair eyes declaring war and peace
that burn my heart in fire and in ice?

221

What fate of mine, what force or what deceit
is leading me, unarmed, back to the field
where I am always conquered? Should I escape
I'll be surprised, and if I die, ashamed.

Not really shame, but gain; inside my heart
so sweetly are the sparks and the bright lightning
that stun, tormenting it—in it I blaze
and still am burning for the twentieth year.

I feel Death's messengers when I see coming
those lovely eyes that sparkle from afar;
if she turns them toward me as she approaches,

Love with such sweetness wounds and cures my wounds,
I can't recapture it, no less explain,
for neither wit nor tongue can touch the truth.

222

“Liete et pensose, accompagnate et sole,
Donne che ragionando ite per via:
ove è la vita, ove la morte mia?
perché non è con voi com’ ella sòle?” 4

“Liete siam per memoria di quel sole,
dogliose per sua dolce compagnia
la qual ne toglie invidia et gelosia
che d’altrui ben quasi suo mal si dole.” 8

“Chi pon freno a li amanti o dà lor legge?”
“Nessun a l’alma; al corpo, ira et asprezza;
questo or in lei, talor si prova in noi. 11

“Ma spesso ne la fronte il cor si legge,
sì vedemmo oscurar l’alta bellezza
et tutti rugiadosi li occhi suoi.” 14

223

Quando ’l sol bagna in mar l’aurato carro
et l’aere nostro et la mia mente imbruna,
col cielo et co le stelle et co la luna
un’angosciosa et dura notte innarro: 4

poi, lasso, a tal che non m’ascolta narro
tutte le mie fatiche ad una ad una,
et col mondo et con mia cieca fortuna,
con Amor, con Madonna et meco garro. 8

Il sonno è ’n bando et del riposo è nulla,
ma sospiri et lamenti infin a l’alba
e lagrime che l’alma a li occhi invia. 11

Vien poi l’aurora et l’aura fosca inalba,
me no; ma ’l sol che ’l cor m’arde et trastulla,
quel po solo adolcir la doglia mia. 14

222

“Happy yet sad, in company yet alone,
Ladies who walk along in conversation,
where is the life, where is that death of mine?
Why is she not with you as usual?”

“We’re happy to be thinking of that sun,
and sad that jealousy and envy takes
her lovely company from us and grieves
at another’s good as if at its own harm.”

“Who can hold lovers back or give them rules?”
“The soul, no one; the body, wrath and rigor;
you see it now in her, sometimes in us.

“Often the heart can be read through the face,
and thus we saw her lofty beauty darkened,
those eyes of hers all watery with dew.”

223

When in the sea the sun bathes his gold chariot
and darkens all our air and my mind too,
with all the heavens and the stars and moon
I settle for a hard and anguished night;

and then, alas, to one who does not listen
I tell all of my troubles one by one,
and with the world and with my own blind fortune,
with Love, my Lady and myself I quarrel.

All sleep is banished, rest is nullified,
only laments and sighs until the dawn
and tears sent by the soul up to the eyes.

Dawn comes and brightens the dark air, not me;
that sun which burns and gives my heart delight,
that one alone can make my torment sweet.

224

S' una fede amorosa, un cor non finto,
un languir dolce, un desiar cortese,
s' oneste voglie in gentil foco accese,
un lungo error in cieco laberinto, 4

se ne la fronte ogni penser depinto,
od in voci interrotte a pena intese
or da paura or da vergogna offese,
s' un pallor di viola et d'amor tinto, 8

s' aver altrui più caro che se stesso,
se sospirare et lagrimar mai sempre
pascendosi di duol d'ira et d'affanno, 11

s' arder da lunge et agghiacciar da presso,
son le cagion ch' amando i' mi distempre:
vostro, Donna, 'l peccato et mio fia 'l danno. 14

225

Dodici donne onestamente lasse,
anzi dodici stelle, e 'n mezzo un sole
vidi in una barchetta allegre et sole
qual non so s' altra mai onde solcasse; 4

simil non credo che Jasòn portasse
al vello onde oggi ogni uom vestir si vole,
né 'l pastor di ch' ancor Troia si dole,
de' qua' duo tal romor al mondo fasse. 8

Poi le vidi in un carro triunfale,
Laurëa mia con suoi santi atti schifi
sedersi in parte et cantar dolcemente: 11

non cose umane o vision mortale.
Felice Autumedòn, felice Tifi
che conduceste sì leggiadra gente! 14

224

If loving faithfulness, unfeigning heart,
sweet languishing and courteous desire,
chaste wishes kindled in a noble fire,
long wandering in a blind labyrinth,

if all my thoughts are painted on my brow
or barely understood in broken words
or cut short out of fear or from my shame,
if mine is violet's pallor, tint of love,

if loving someone else more than oneself,
if to be always sighing and in tears,
feeding on grief, on angers and on trouble,

if burning from afar, freezing close by,
are causes that undo me in my love,
the blame is yours, my lady, mine the loss.

225

Twelve ladies I saw virtuously at ease,
twelve stars they were, and in their midst a sun,
all happy and alone in a small bark
the likes of which I think has never sailed.

It was not like the one that carried Jason
to the fleece all men these days would like to wear,
or like the shepherd's for whom Troy still grieves,
about which two the world makes so much noise.

Then I saw them in a triumphal cart,
my Laurel with her holy, modest manner,
was sitting to one side and singing sweetly—

a sight not human, not a mortal vision.
Happy Automedon, O happy Tiphys
who steered such charming folk as these!

226

Passer mai solitario in alcun tetto
non fu quant' io, né fera in alcun bosco,
ch' i' non veggio 'l bel viso et non conosco
altro sol, né quest'occhi ànn' altro obietto. 4

Lagrimar sempre è 'l mio sommo diletto,
il rider doglia, il cibo assenzio et tosco,
la notte affanno e 'l ciel seren m'è fosco,
et duro campo di battaglia il letto. 8

Il sonno è veramente, qual uom dice,
parente de la morte e 'l cor sottragge
a quel dolce penser che 'n vita il tene. 11

Solo al mondo paese almo felice,
verdi rive fiorite, ombrose piagge:
voi possedete et io piango il mio bene. 14

227

Aura che quelle chiome bionde et crespe
cercondi et movi et se' mossa da loro
soavemente, et spargi quel dolce oro
et poi 'l raccogli e 'n bei nodi il rincrespe: 4

tu stai nelli occhi ond' amorose vespe
mi pungon sì che 'n fin qua il sento et ploro,
et vacillando cerco il mio tesoro
come animal che spesso adombre e 'ncespe; 8

ch' or mel par ritrovar et or m'accorgo
ch' i' ne son lunge, or mi sollievo or caggio,
ch' or quel ch' i' bramo or quel ch' è vero scorgo. 11

Aer felice, col bel vivo raggio
rimanti; et tu, corrente et chiaro gorgo:
ché non poss' io cangiar teco viaggio? 14

226

No sparrow on a roof was so alone
as I am now, nor beast in any forest,
for her fair face is missing, and I know
no other sun, my eyes no other object.

My greatest joy derives from constant weeping,
my pain from laughter; food is gall and poison,
the night a struggle; clear skies are dark for me,
and a hard field of battle is my bed.

Sleep is, in truth, as all men seem to think,
akin to death, and it relieves the heart
of that sweet thought that gives it strength to live.

Rich, happy country unique in the world,
green riverbanks in bloom and shady meadows,
my treasure that I yearn for, you possess.

227

Breeze that surrounds those blond and curling locks,
that makes them move and which is moved by them
in softness, and that scatters the sweet gold,
then gathers it in lovely knots recurling,

you linger in the eyes whence wasps of love
sting me—I feel it far as here and weep—
and staggering I try to find my treasure
the way a beast that shies and stumbles does;

I seem to find her now, now I'm aware
I'm far from her, relieved now, now deluded,
now I see what I yearn for, now the truth.

O happy air, remain with that alive
and lovely ray; and you, clear running stream,
why can I not exchange my course for yours?

228

Amor co la man destra il lato manco
m'aperse, et piantovvi entro in mezzo 'l core
un lauro verde sì che di colore
ogni smeraldo avria ben vinto et stanco. 4

Vomer di penna con sospir del fianco
e 'l piover giù dalli occhi un dolce umore
l'adornar sì ch' al ciel n'andò l'odore,
qual non so già se d'altre frondi unquanco. 8

Fama, onor, et vertute et leggiadria,
casta bellezza in abito celeste
son le radici de la nobil pianta. 11

Tal la mi trovo al petto ove ch' i' sia,
felice incarco! et con preghiere oneste
l'adoro e 'nchino come cosa santa. 14

229

Cantai, or piango; et non men di dolcezza
del pianger prendo che del canto presi,
ch' a la cagion, non a l'effetto intesi
son i miei sensi vaghi pur d'altezza. 4

Indi et mansuetudine et durezza
et atti feri et umili et cortesi
porto egualmente; né me gravan pesi,
né l'arme mie punta di sdegni spezza. 8

Tengan dunque ver me l'usato stile
Amor, Madonna, il mondo et mia fortuna,
ch' i' non penso esser mai se non felice; 11

viva o mora o languisca, un più gentile
stato del mio non è sotto la luna,
sì dolce è del mio amaro la radice. 14

228

With his right hand Love opened my left side
and in the middle of my heart he planted
a laurel of such green it would surpass
and tire out the light of every emerald.

With plowing of my pen and my heart's sighs,
on rain of the sweet liquid from my eyes
it thrived so that its fragrance reached the heavens
—no other leaf I know can equal it.

Honor and fame, virtuousness and charm,
and purest beauty in celestial bearing
are all the roots of such a noble plant.

My heart finds this, wherever I may be,
a happy burden! In chaste prayer I bow,
adoring it as something that is holy.

229

I sang once, now I weep, and no less sweetness
comes from my tears than once came from my song,
for on the cause, not the effect, my senses,
only in love with heights, are concentrated.

And so docility as well as harshness
and gestures that are cruel, humble or kind,
I suffer equally; the weight's not heavy,
nor does the point of disdain pierce my armor.

Let them keep treating me the way they do,
Love and my lady, fortune and the world,
for I can think of only being happy.

Whether I live, languish or die, there is
no nobler state than mine beneath the moon,
so sweet the root of what for me is bitter.

230

I' piansi, or canto; ché 'l celeste lume
quel vivo sole alli occhi miei non cela,
nel qual onesto Amor chiaro revela
sua dolce forza et suo santo costume; 4

onde e' suol trar di lagrime tal fiume,
per accorciar del mio viver la tela,
che non pur ponte o guado o remi o vela
ma scampar non potienmi ale né piume. 8

Sì profondo era et di sì larga vena
il pianger mio, et sì lunge la riva,
ch' i' v'aggiungeva col penser a pena. 11

Non lauro o palma, ma tranquilla oliva
pietà mi manda, et 'l tempo rasserena,
e 'l pianto asciuga et vuol ancor ch' i' viva. 14

231

I' mi vivea di mia sorte contento
senza lagrime et senza invidia alcuna,
ché s' altro amante à più destra fortuna,
mille piacer non vaglion un tormento. 4

Or quei belli occhi, ond' io mai non mi pento
de le mie pene et men non ne voglio una,
tal nebbia copre sì gravosa et bruna
che 'l sol de la mia vita à quasi spento. 8

O Natura, pietosa et fera madre:
onde tal possa et sì contrarie voglie
di far cose et disfar tanto leggiadre? 11

D'un vivo fonte ogni poder s'accoglie;
ma tu come 'l consenti, o sommo Padre,
che del tuo caro dono altri ne spoglie? 14

230

I wept and now I sing: that living sun
does not hide from my eyes her heavenly light
in which virtuous Love clearly reveals
the sweetness of his force and holy ways;

and such a stream of tears he's drawn from me
to wind the thread of my life ever shorter,
that wings nor feathers, let alone a bridge
or ford or oars or sails, could rescue me.

And so profound and from so full a source
my weeping was, and so far off the shore
that I could hardly reach it in my thoughts.

Not laurel or a palm but peaceful olive
her pity sends me, and it clears the air
and dries the tears and makes me go on living.

231

I was alive and happy with my fate,
without a tear, with envy of no kind;
if other lovers are more fortunate,
a thousand joys aren't worth a single sorrow.

Now those fair eyes, for which I won't repent
my sorrows nor exchange a single one,
are covered by so dark and dense a cloud
that my life's sun has almost been extinguished.

O Nature, merciful and cruel mother:
whence comes such power, such opposing wills,
to do and undo things that are so lovely?

A single living source provides all power.
But how can You allow, O highest Father,
that so dear a gift from You be taken from us?

232

Vincitore Alessandro l'ira vinse
et fe 'l minore in parte che Filippo:
ché li val se Pirgotile et Lisippo
l'intagliar solo et Apelle il depinse?

L'ira Tideo a tal rabbia sospinse
che morendo ei si rose Menalippo;
l'ira cieco del tutto, non pur lippo,
fatto avea Silla, a l'ultimo l'estinse.

Sa 'l Valentinian ch' a simil pena
ira conduce; et sa 'l quei che ne more,
Ajace, in molti et poi in se stesso forte.

Ira è breve furore; et chi nol frena,
è furor lungo che 'l suo possessore
spesso a vergogna et talor mena a morte.

233

Qual ventura mi fu quando da l'uno
de' duo i più belli occhi che mai furo,
mirandol di dolor turbato et scuro,
mosse vertù che fe' 'l mio infermo et bruno!

Send' io tornato a solver il digiuno
di veder lei che sola al mondo curo,
fummi il ciel et Amor men che mai duro,
se tutte altre mie grazie inseme aduno;

ché dal destr' occhio—anzi dal destro sole—
de la mia donna al mio destr' occhio venne
il mal che mi diletta et non mi dole;

et pur com' intelletto avesse et penne,
passò quasi una stella che 'n ciel vole;
et Natura et Pietate il corso tenne.

232

Wrath vanquished the victorious Alexander
and made him less a figure than was Philip:
What good that Pyrgoteles and Lysippus
alone could sculpt him and Apelles paint him?

Wrath rushed Tydeus off in such a rage
that dying still he gnawed on Melanippus.
Wrath did not merely blur the sight of Sulla,
it blinded him and killed him in the end.

Valentinianus knows that to such punishment
wrath leads; he knows it, too, who died of it:
Ajax, strong over many, then himself.

Wrath's a short madness; but for one who can't
control it, it is long, and its possessor
it often brings to shame and sometimes death.

233

How fortunate for me that from one of
the two loveliest eyes that ever were,
when I saw them disturbed and dark with pain,
there came a force that made mine sick and dim!

To me who had returned to break the fast
of seeing her, my sole care in the world,
Heaven and Love have been less harsh than all
the other graces I've received collected;

for from the right eye—better, the right sun—
of my lady to my own right eye there came
the illness that delights me with no pain;

as if it had an intellect and wings,
it transferred like a star shoots through the sky,
Nature and Pity giving it its course.

234

O cameretta che già fosti un porto
a le gravi tempeste mie diurne:
fonte se' or di lagrime notturne
che 'l dì celate per vergogna porto. 4

O letticciuol che requie eri et conforto
in tanti affanni: di che dogliose urne
ti bagna Amor con quelle mani eburne,
solo ver me crudeli a sì gran torto! 8

Né pur il mio secreto e 'l mio riposo
fuggo, ma più me stesso e 'l mio pensero
che seguendol talor levommi a volo; 11

e 'l vulgo a me nemico et odioso
(chi 'l pensò mai?) per mio refugio chero,
tal paura ò di ritrovarmi solo. 14

235

Lasso, Amor mi trasporta ov' ir non voglio,
et ben m'accorgo che 'l dever si varca;
onde a chi nel mio cor siede monarca
sono importuno assai più ch' i' non soglio. 4

Né mai saggio nocchier guardò da scoglio
nave di merci preziose carca,
quant' io sempre la debile mia barca
da le percosse del suo duro orgoglio, 8

ma lagrimosa pioggia et fieri venti
d'infiniti sospiri or l'ànno spinta,
ch' è nel mio mare orribil notte et verno 11

ov' altrui noie, a sé doglie et tormenti
porta et non altro già, da l'onde vinta,
disarmata di vele et di governo. 14

234

O little room that once served as a port
from my fierce storms that blow throughout the day,
you have become the font of nightly tears
which in the daytime I hide out of shame.

O little bed that once was rest and comfort
for so much labor, with what grieving urns
does Love bathe you with ivory hands of hers,
so cruel only to me, and so unjustly!

Not only from my hiding place and rest
I flee, but more from my own self and thoughts
that used to take me with them high in flight;

I seek the crowd for me hateful, unfriendly
(who ever thought I would?) as place of refuge.
I'm so afraid to find myself alone.

235

Alas, Love takes me where I would not go,
and I know well I go beyond my duty,
thus I am more annoying, more than ever,
to her who sits as monarch in my heart.

No wiser helmsman guards from rocks his ship
so laden with its precious merchandise
than I who always kept my fragile skiff
from all the blows that came from her hard pride.

But now the rain of tears and violent gales
of sighs that never end have driven it
into my sea of awful night and winter

to menace others, bearing nothing more
than its own grief and pain, vanquished by waves
and now bereft of its own sails and rudder.

236

Amor, io fallo et veggio il mio fallire,
ma fo sì com' uom ch' arde e 'l foco à 'n seno;
ché 'l duol pur cresce, et la ragion ven meno,
et è già quasi vinta dal martire. 4

Solea frenare il mio caldo desire
per non turbare il bel viso sereno;
non posso più, di man m'ài tolto il freno,
et l'alma desperando à preso ardire. 8

Però s' oltra suo stile ella s' aventa,
tu 'l fai, che sì l'accendi et sì la sproni
ch' ogni aspra via per sua salute tenta; 11

et più 'l fanno i celesti et rari doni
ch' à in sé Madonna; or fa' almen ch' ella il senta
et le mie colpe a se stessa perdoni. 14

237

Non à tanti animali il mar fra l'onde,
né lassù sopra 'l cerchio de la luna
vide mai tante stelle alcuna notte,
né tanti augelli albergan per li boschi,
né tant' erbe ebbe mai campo né piaggia
quant' à 'l mio cor pensier ciascuna sera. 6

Di dì in dì spero omai l'ultima sera
che scevri in me dal vivo terren l'onde
et mi lasci dormire in qualche piaggia;
ché tanti affanni uom mai sotto la luna
non sofferse quant' io, sannolsi i boschi
che sol vo ricercando giorno et notte. 12

I' non ebbi giamai tranquilla notte,
ma sospirando andai matino et sera,
poi ch' Amor femmi un cittadin de' boschi;
ben fia, prima ch' i' posi, il mar senz' onde,

236

O Love, I err and I can see my error,
but I act like a man whose chest's afire,
whose pain keeps growing and whose reason fails
from nearly being vanquished by his pain.

I used to fight the heat of my desire
in order not to darken her clear face;
I can no more; you took control from me,
and in despair my soul has grown more bold.

Then if against its style it ventures off,
the fault is yours—you burn and spur it so,
it tries the hardest ways to save itself—

and more the fault of those rare, heavenly gifts
which are my lady's. At least make her see this
and then forgive herself my own transgressions.

237

There aren't as many fish in the sea's waves,
nor up beyond the circle of the moon
were seen as many stars by any night,
nor do as many birds dwell in the woods,
nor any field with as much grass, or shore,
as all the thoughts my heart has every evening.

Now day to day I hope for the last evening
to cut in me the living earth from waves
and let me go to sleep upon some shore;
as many trials no man beneath the moon
has suffered as I do—they know, those woods
that I, alone, go searching day and night.

I've never had tranquility of night,
instead I've always sighed morning and evening
since Love made me a dweller of the woods;
before I rest the sea will have no waves,

et la sua luce avrà 'l sol da la luna,
e i fior d'april morranno in ogni piaggia,

Consumendo mi vo di piaggia in piaggia
el dì pensoso, poi piango la notte;
né stato ò mai se non quanto la luna.
Ratto come imbrunir veggio la sera
sospir del petto et de li occhi escono onde
da bagnar l'erbe et da crollare i boschi.

Le città son nemiche, amici i boschi
a' miei pensier che per quest'alta piaggia
sfogando vo col mormorar de l'onde
per lo dolce silenzio de la notte,
tal ch' io aspetto tutto 'l dì la sera
che 'l sol si parta et dia luogo a la luna.

Deh, or foss' io col vago de la luna
adormentato in qua' che verdi boschi,
et questa ch' anzi vespro a me fa sera
con essa et con Amor in quella piaggia
sola venisse a starsi ivi una notte,
e 'l dì si stesse e 'l sol sempre ne l'onde!

Sovra dure onde al lume de la luna,
canzon nata di notte in mezzo i boschi,
ricca piaggia vedrai deman da sera.

the sun's light will be furnished by the moon
and April's flowers die on every shore.

Pining away I go from shore to shore,
pensive all day, and then I weep all night;
nor am I any stabler than the moon.
No sooner than I see the dark of evening,
sighs from my breast, and from my eyes, flow waves
to wet the grass and tremble through the woods.

Cities are foes, but friendly are the woods
to all my thoughts which on this lofty shore
I pour out with the murmuring of the waves
throughout the sweetest silence of the night:
so that I wait the whole day long for evening
when the sun leaves to make way for the moon.

Ah, were I with the lover of the moon
fallen asleep somewhere in a green woods,
and she, who before vespers gives me evening,
came with the moon and Love toward that shore
alone and were to stay there for one night,
with day and sun forever under waves!

Above harsh waves, under a shining moon,
canzone, born by night within the woods,
a rich shore you will see tomorrow evening.

238

Real natura, angelico intelletto,
chiara alma, pronta vista, occhio cerviero,
providenzia veloce, alto pensero
et veramente degno di quel petto! 4

Sendo di donne un bel numero eletto
per adornar il dì festo et altero,
subito scorse il buon giudicio intero
fra tanti et sì bei volti il più perfetto. 8

L'altre, maggior di tempo o di fortuna,
trarsi in disparte comandò con mano
et caramente accolse a sé quell'una; 11

li occhi et la fronte con sembiante umano
basciolle sì che rallegrò ciascuna;
me empiè d'invidia l'atto dolce et strano. 14

239

Là ver l'aurora, che sì dolce l'aura
al tempo novo suol movere i fiori
et li augelletti incominciar lor versi,
sì dolcemente i pensier dentro a l'alma
mover mi sento a chi li à tutti in forza
che ritornar convenmi a le mie note. 6

Temprar potess' io in sì soavi note
i miei sospiri ch' addolcissen Laura,
facendo a lei ragion ch' a me fa forza!
Ma pria fia 'l verno la stagion de' fiori
ch' amor fiorisca in quella nobil alma
che non curò giamai rime né versi. 12

Quante lagrime, lasso, et quanti versi
ò già sparti al mio tempo, e 'n quante note
ò riprovato umiliar quell'alma!

238

A regal nature, angel's intellect,
an unflawed soul, quick sight, eye of the lynx,
a swift foresight, thought of the highest level,
one truly worthy to dwell in that breast!

Finding many a lady there selected
to adorn the lofty day and its festivity,
his good, sound judgment quickly recognized
the best among so many lovely faces.

The others, all of greater age or fortune,
he ordered with a gesture to one side
and sweetly called that one to come to him;

with a kind look her eyes and then her brow
he kissed which filled the others there with joy
and me with envy for this strange, sweet action.

239

When day is dawning and so sweet an aura
that always comes in spring to stir the flowers,
and little birds begin to sing their verses,
so sweetly I feel thoughts inside my soul
stirred by the one who holds them in her force
that I consent to go back to my notes.

Could I but temper with such gentle notes
my sighs in order that they sweeten Laura,
reasoning with the one who uses force!
But winter will become the season for flowers
before love blossoms in that noble soul
who never cared for rhymes or for my verses.

How many tears, alas, how many verses
I've scattered in my time; in how many notes
I've tried again to make humble that soul!

Ella si sta pur com' aspr' alpe a l'aura
dolce, la qual ben move frondi et fiori
ma nulla po se 'ncontr' a maggior forza. 18

Omini et dei solea vincer per forza
Amor, come si legge in prose e 'n versi,
et io 'l provai in sul primo aprir de' fiori;
ora né 'l mio signor, né le sue note,
né 'l pianger mio, né i preghi pon far Laura
trarre o di vita o di martir quest'alma. 24

A l'ultimo bisogno, o misera alma,
accampa ogni tuo ingegno, ogni tua forza,
mentre fra noi di vita alberga l'aura.
Nulla al mondo è che non possano i versi:
et li aspidi incantar sanno in lor note,
non che 'l gelo adornar di novi fiori. 30

Ridon or per le piagge erbette et fiori:
esser non po che quella angelica alma
non senta il suon de l'amorose note;
se nostra ria fortuna è di più forza,
lagrimando et cantando i nostri versi
et col bue zoppo andrem cacciando l'aura. 36

In rete accolgo l'aura e 'n ghiaccio i fiori,
e 'n versi tento sorda et rigida alma
che né forza d'Amor prezza né note. 39

She stands like a rough mountain to the aura
sweet, that indeed does move the leaves and flowers
but can do nothing against a greater force.

Mankind and gods are vanquished by the force
of Love, as we read both in prose and verse,
and I felt this when buds first turned to flowers;
but now neither my lord nor his own notes,
nor tears of mine nor prayers can cause Laura
to draw from life or martyrdom this soul.

In your last need, O miserable soul,
collect all of your wit, all of your force
while still among us dwells the living aura.
There's nothing can't be done by means of verses:
they can charm even serpents with their notes,
and decorate the frost with newborn flowers.

The slopes now laugh with tender grass and flowers:
it cannot be that her angelic soul
hears not the sound of all these amorous notes;
if our cruel fortune has a greater force,
we shall, weeping and singing out our verses,
go like the lame ox hunting for the aura.

In nets I catch the aura, in ice the flowers,
in verse I woo a deaf and rigid soul
who prizes neither force of love nor notes.

240

I' ò pregato Amor, e 'l ne riprego,
che mi scusi appo voi, dolce mia pena,
amaro mio diletto, se con piena
fede dal dritto mio sentier mi piego. 4

I' nol posso negar, Donna, et nol nego,
che la ragion ch' ogni bona alma affrena
non sia dal voler vinta, ond' ei mi mena
talor in parte ov' io per forza il sego. 8

Voi con quel cor che di sì chiaro ingegno,
di sì alta vertute il cielo alluma
quanto mai piovve da benigna stella, 11

devete dir pietosa et senza sdegno:
"Che po questi altro? il mio volto il consuma.
Ei perché ingordo, et io perché sì bella?" 14

241

L'alto signor dinanzi a cui non vale
nasconder né fuggir né difesa,
di bel piacer m'avea la mente accesa
con un ardente et amoroso strale; 4

et, ben che 'l primo colpo aspro et mortale
fossi da sé, per avanzar sua impresa
una saetta di pietate à presa
et quinci et quindi il cor punge et assale. 8

L'una piaga arde et versa foco et fiamma,
lagrime l'altra, che 'l dolor distilla
per li occhi mei del vostro stato rio; 11

né, per duo fonti, sol una favilla
rallenta de l'incendio che m'infiamma,
anzi per la pietà cresce 'l desio. 14

240

I have begged Love and I beg him again
to beg your pardon for me, my sweet pain,
my bitter bliss, if I with my complete
faithfulness deviate from the straight path.

I can't deny, I don't deny, my Lady,
that reason who restrains every good soul
may be at times won over by desire
who leads me there where I am forced to follow.

You, with that heart the heavens have lit up
with intellect so bright, with such high virtue
—as much as ever poured from a good star—

should say with pity and no trace of scorn:
"What choice does this man have? My face consumes him.
Why is he greedy? Why am I so lovely?"

241

That lofty lord from whom it does not serve
to hide or flee or to protect yourself,
had set my mind aflame in lovely bliss
with just an arrow burning in its love;

the first blow in itself was sharp and mortal,
but he in order to advance his case,
took up another arrow made of mercy
and from both sides assails and stabs my heart.

The one wound burns and pours out flame and fire,
the other, tears that misery distills
from out my eyes because of your sad state;

in spite of these two fountains, not a spark
is lost within the blaze of all my burning;
rather, through pity my desire grows.

242

"Mira quel colle, o stanco mio cor vago:
ivi lasciammo ier lei ch' alcun tempo ebbe
qualche cura di noi et le n'encrebbe,
or vorria trar de li occhi nostri un lago. 4

"Torna tu in là, ch' io d'esser sol m'appago;
tenta se forse ancor tempo sarebbe
da scemar nostro duol che 'nfin qui crebbe,
o del mio mal participe et presago." 8

Or tu ch' ài posto te stesso in oblio
et parli al cor pur come e' fusse or teco,
miser et pien di pensier vani et sciocchi! 11

ch' al dipartir dal tuo sommo desio
tu te n'andasti, e' si rimase seco
et si nascose dentro a' suoi belli occhi. 14

243

Fresco ombroso fiorito et verde colle
ov' or pensando et or cantando siede,
et fa qui de' celesti spiriti fede
quella ch' a tutto 'l mondo fama tolle: 4

il mio cor che per lei lasciar mi volle—
et fe' gran senno, et più se mai non riede—
va or contando ove da quel bel piede
segnata è l'erba et da quest'occhi è molle. 8

Seco si stringe et dice a ciascun passo:
"Deh, fusse or qui quel miser pur un poco,
ch' è già di pianger et di viver lasso!" 11

Ella sel ride, et non è pari il gioco:
tu paradiso, i' senza cor un sasso,
o sacro, aventuroso et dolce loco! 14

242

"Look at that hill, my tired heart that yearns:
there yesterday we left her, she who once
felt care and had some sympathy for us
and now would turn our eyes into a lake.

"Return there, I'll be glad to be alone;
see if it is not time for us to lessen
our anguish which has grown until this day,
O prescient sharer of my suffering."

Now you who have forgotten your own self
talk to your heart as if you still possessed it,
poor wretch, so full of vain and silly thoughts!

For by departing from your highest wish
you went away and your heart stayed with her
and hid inside those lovely eyes of hers.

243

Green hill, a cool and shady flowering place
where she sits now in thought and now in song,
as she bears witness here of Heaven's blest,
she who outdoes all fame throughout the world:

my heart that wanted to leave me for her,
and showed good sense (and more by not returning)
goes counting now on grass where her fair foot
left signs and I the wetness of my eyes.

He moves toward her and says with every step,
"Ah, could that wretch be here for just awhile,
he's so worn out from weeping and from life!"

She smiles at that. But this game is not fair:
I'm stone without my heart, you're paradise,
O sacred and most fortunate, sweet place.

244

Il mal mi preme et mi spaventa il peggio,
al qual veggio sì larga et piana via
ch' i' son intrato in simil frenesia,
et con duro penser teco vaneggio;

né so se guerra o pace a Dio mi cheggio,
ché 'l danno è grave et la vergogna è ria.
Ma perché più languir? di noi pur fia
quel ch' ordinato è già nel sommo seggio.

Ben ch' i' non sia di quel grand' onor degno
che tu mi fai, ché te n'inganna Amore
che spesso occhio ben san fa veder torto,

pur d'alzar l'alma a quel celeste regno
è il mio consiglio et di spronare il core,
perché 'l camin è lungo e 'l tempo è corto.

245

Due rose fresche et colte in paradiso
l'altr'ier, nascendo il dì primo di maggio,
bel dono et d'un amante antiquo et saggio
tra duo minori egualmente diviso,

con sì dolce parlar et con un riso
da far innamorare un uom selvaggio,
di sfavillante et amoroso raggio
et l'un' et l'altro fe' cangiare il viso.

"Non vede un simil par d'amanti il sole,"
dicea ridendo et sospirando inseme,
et stringendo ambedue volgeasi a torno.

Così partia le rose et le parole,
onde 'l cor lasso ancor s'allegra et teme:
o felice eloquenzia! o lieto giorno!

244

I'm crushed by ills and terrified by worse
to which I see so broad and smooth a way
that I have entered your same frenzied road,
and with hard thoughts I ramble on with you,

not knowing to ask God for peace or war,
so heavy is the loss and cruel the shame.
Why go on brooding? What is ours already
has been ordained by Heaven's highest throne.

Unworthy as I am of that great honor
you give to me—you are deceived by Love
who often makes a healthy eye see wrong—

I still advise you lift your soul above
to the celestial realm and spur your heart
because the road is long and time is short.

245

Two roses fresh and picked in paradise
the other day, born on the first of May,
a sweet gift from a lover old and wise,
shared equally between two younger ones,

accompanied by words and smile so sweet
(they could have made a savage fall in love),
with stream of light that sparkles lovingly
had brought about a change on both their faces.

"Lovers like these the sun has never seen,"
he said smiling and sighing both at once;
embracing both of them, he then turned round.

And so he shared the roses and the words;
my weary heart still fears in its own bliss.
Oh happy eloquence! Oh joyful day!

246

L'aura che 'l verde lauro et l'aureo crine
soavemente sospirando move
fa con sue viste leggiadrette et nove
l'anime da' lor corpi pellegrine. 4

Candida rosa nata in dure spine,
quando fia chi sua pari al mondo trove?
Gloria di nostra etate! O vivo Giove,
manda, prego, il mio in prima che 'l suo fine! 8

sì ch' io non veggia il gran publico danno
e 'l mondo remaner senza 'l suo sole
né li occhi miei, che luce altra non ànno; 11

né l'alma, che pensar d'altro non vole,
né l'orecchie, ch' udir altro non sanno,
senza l'oneste sue dolci parole. 14

247

Parrà forse ad alcun che 'n lodar quella
ch' i' adoro in terra, errante sia 'l mio stile
faccendo lei sovr' ogni altra gentile,
santa, saggia, leggiadra, onesta et bella. 4

A me par il contrario, et temo ch' ella
non abbia a schifo il mio dir troppo umile,
degna d'assai più alto et più sottile;
et chi nol crede venga egli a vedella, 8

sì dirà ben: "Quello ove questi aspira
è cosa da stancare Atene, Arpino,
Mantova et Smirna, et l'una et l'altra lira. 11

"Lingua mortale al suo stato divino
giunger non pote; Amor la spinge et tira
non per elezion ma per destino." 14

246

The aura sighing gently as it moves
the verdant laurel and her golden hair,
turns, with its aspects new and delicate,
souls into pilgrims wandering from their bodies.

Whiteness of rose born high among hard thorns,
when will the world find one like her again?
O glory of our age! O living Jove,
I beg you take my life before hers ends!

Spare me the sight of public loss so great
and of the world's existence without sun;
spare my own eyes that have no other light,

and my soul, too, that thinks of nothing else,
my ears, unable to hear other sounds
except the sweet perfection of her words.

247

Someone perhaps may think, in praise of her
whom I adore on earth, my style is wrong
in making her beyond all others gracious,
saintly and wise, charming and chaste and lovely.

I think the opposite, and fear that she
disdains the humble words I use for her;
she merits higher, finer ones than mine—
who does not trust me, come and gaze on her.

Who does will say: "What this man hopes to do
would tire out all Arpinum and Athens,
Mantua, Smyrna, one lyre and the other.

"A mortal tongue can never touch the state
of her divinity; Love draws and drives
his tongue, and not by choice but destiny."

248

Chi vuol veder quantunque po Natura
e 'l Ciel tra noi, venga a mirar costei
ch' è sola un sol, non pur a li occhi mei
ma al mondo cieco che vertù non cura; 4

et venga tosto, perché Morte fura
prima i migliori et lascia star i rei:
questa aspettata al regno delli dei
cosa bella mortal passa et non dura. 8

Vedrà, s' arriva a tempo, ogni vertute,
ogni bellezza, ogni real costume
giunti in un corpo con mirabil tempre; 11

allor dirà che mie rime son mute,
l'ingegno offeso dal soverchio lume.
Ma se più tarda, avrà da pianger sempre. 14

249

Qual paura ò quando mi torna a mente
quel giorno ch' i' lasciai grave et pensosa
Madonna e 'l mio cor seco! et non è cosa
che sì volentier pensi et sì sovente. 4

I' la riveggio starsi umilemente
tra belle donne, a guisa d'una rosa
tra minor fior, né lieta né dogliosa,
come chi teme et altro mal non sente. 8

Deposta avea l'usata leggiadria,
le perle et le ghirlande et i panni allegri,
e 'l riso e 'l canto e 'l parlar dolce umano. 11

Così in dubbio lasciai la vita mia;
or tristi auguri, et sogni et penser negri
mi dànno assalto, et piaccia a Dio che 'nvano! 14

248

Who seeks to see the best Nature and Heaven
can do among us, come and gaze on her,
sole sun, and not for my eyes only but
for the blind world which does not care for virtue;

come quickly now, because Death steals away
the best ones first and leaves behind the worst:
this one, awaited in the kingdom of the gods,
this lovely, mortal thing will pass, not last.

He'll see, if he arrives in time, all virtue,
all loveliness, all regal-mannered ways
joined in one body, tempered marvelously;

then he will say that all my verse is dumb,
my talent overcome by too much light.
But if he waits too long, he'll weep forever.

249

What fear I feel when I recall to mind
the day I left my lady sad and pensive
and with her there my heart. Yet there is nothing
that I so wish to think about so often.

Again I see her humble presence there
among fair ladies, like a rose among
the lesser flowers, neither gay nor sad,
like one who fears but feels no other ill.

She had discarded all her elegance,
her pearls, her garlands and her cheerful dress,
her laughing, singing, her sweet human words.

And so I left my life there full of doubt;
and now sad omens, dreams and blackest thoughts
attack me! Oh please God, let them be false!

250

Solea lontana in sonno consolarme
con quella dolce angelica sua vista
Madonna, or mi spaventa et mi contrista,
né di duol né di tema posso aitarme; 4

ché spesso nel suo volto veder parme
vera pietà con grave dolor mista,
et udir cose onde 'l cor fede acquista
che di gioia et di speme si disarme. 8

"Non ti soven di quella ultima sera,"
dice ella, "ch' i' lasciai li occhi tuoi molli
et sforzata dal tempo me n'andai? 11

"I' non tel potei dir allor, né volli;
or tel dico per cosa esperta et vera:
non sperar di vedermi in terra mai." 14

251

O misera et orribil visione!
E' dunque ver che 'nnanzi tempo spenta
sia l'alma luce che suol far contenta
mia vita in pene et in speranze bone? 4

Ma come è che sì gran romor non sone
per altri messi et per lei stessa il senta?
Or già Dio et Natura nol consenta,
et falsa sia mia trista opinione! 8

A me pur giova di sperare ancora
la dolce vista del bel viso adorno
che me mantene e 'l secol nostro onora. 11

Se per salir a l'eterno soggiorno
uscita è pur del bell'albergo fora,
prego non tardi il mio ultimo giorno. 14

250

From far away she would console my sleep
with the angelic sweetness of her face,
my lady; now she scares and saddens me,
and I have no defense from grief or fear;

for often in her face I seemed to see
the truth of pity mixed with serious pain,
and to hear things that would persuade my heart
to lay the arms of joy and hope aside.

"Do you remember that last night of ours,"
she says, "when I left you, your eyes in tears,
and I was forced to leave by the late hour?

"I could not tell you then, nor did I want to,
but now I'll tell you something tried and true:
Don't ever hope to see me here on earth."

251

Oh miserable and terrifying vision!
Could it be true her holy light is out
before her time, the light that made content
my life as much in grief as in true hopes?

Why is it such great rumor does not sound
by other means than hearing it from her?
Let God and Nature not consent to it,
and let my sad opinion not be true!

I must continue hoping for her presence,
the sweetness of her lovely countenance
that gives me life and honor to the world.

If to ascend to the eternal kingdom
she is, indeed, gone from her lovely home,
I beg that my last day not come too late.

252

In dubbio di mio stato, or piango or canto,
et temo et spero, et in sospiri e 'n rime
sfogo il mio incarco. Amor tutte sue lime
usa sopra 'l mio core afflitto tanto. 4

Or fia giamai che quel bel viso santo
renda a quest'occhi le lor luci prime
(lasso, non so che di me stesso estime)
o li condanni a sempiterno pianto, 8

et per prendere il Ciel debito a lui,
non curi che si sia di loro in terra
di ch' egli è 'l sole et non veggiono altrui? 11

In tal paura e 'n sì perpetua guerra
vivo ch' i' non son più quel che già fui,
qual chi per via dubbiosa teme et erra. 14

253

O dolci sguardi, o parolette accorte,
or fia mai il dì ch' i' vi riveggia et oda?
O chiome bionde, di che 'l cor m'annoda
Amor et così preso il mena a morte! 4

O bel viso, a me dato in dura sorte
di ch' io sempre pur pianga et mai non goda!
O chiuso inganno et amorosa froda,
darmi un piacer che sol pena m'apporte! 8

Et se talor da' belli occhi soavi,
ove mia vita e 'l mio pensero alberga,
forse mi ven qualche dolcezza onesta, 11

subito, a ciò ch' ogni mio ben disperga
et m'allontane, or fa cavalli or navi
Fortuna, ch' al mio mal sempre è sì presta. 14

252

Fearing my state of mind, I weep, I sing,
I fear and hope, and with my sighs and verse
release my burden: Love with all his tools
works with his might on my affected heart.

Will the time come for that fair, holy face
to give back to these eyes their primal light
(ah, what am I to think about myself)
or will they be condemned to endless weeping?

Will Heaven, taking what belongs to it,
not care about those who remain on earth,
whose sun it is, and who see nothing else?

In such great fear, in such perpetual war
I live, and am not what I used to be,
like one who fears the dubious path and errs.

253

O glances sweet, O little words of wisdom,
will ever you be seen and heard again?
O locks of gold with which Love tangles tight
my heart, and caught this way leads it to death!

O lovely face harsh fate has given me
which always brings me tears and never joy!
O closed betrayal and loving kind of fraud
that gives me joy that brings me only pain!

And if sometimes from those fair, gentle eyes,
the dwelling place of all my life and thought,
there comes, perhaps, a touch of honest sweetness,

at once, to scatter any good I've gained
and drive me off, horses or ships are produced
by Fortune always swift to do me harm.

254

I' pur ascolto, et non odo novella
de la dolce et amata mia nemica,
né so ch' i' me ne pensi o ch' i' mi dica,
sì 'l cor tema e speranza mi puntella.

Nocque ad alcuna già l'esser sì bella,
questa più d'altra è bella et più pudica:
forse vuol Dio tal di vertute amica
torre a la terra e 'n ciel farne una stella,

anzi un sole. Et se questo è, la mia vita,
i miei corti riposi e i lunghi affanni
son giunti al fine. O dura dipartita,

perché lontan m'ài fatto da' miei danni?
La mia favola breve è già compita,
et fornito il mio tempo a mezzo gli anni.

255

La sera desiare, odiar l'aurora
soglion questi tranquilli et lieti amanti;
a me doppia la sera et doglia et pianti.
La mattina è per me più felice ora,

ché spesso in un momento apron allora
l'un sole et l'altro, quasi duo levanti
di beltate et di lume sì sembianti
ch' anco il ciel de la terra s'innamora,

come già fece allor che' primi rami
verdeggiar che nel cor radice m'ànno,
per cui sempre altrui più che me stesso ami.

Così di me due contrarie ore fanno,
et chi m'acqueta è ben ragion ch' i' brami,
et tema et odi' chi m'adduce affanno.

254

I keep on listening but I hear no news
of my sweet enemy, the one I love;
I don't know what to think or tell myself,
my heart is pierced with so much fear and hope.

Such beauty harmed another in the past,
and this one is more fair, more chaste than she:
perhaps God wants so great a friend of virtue
taken from earth and made a star in Heaven—

rather a sun! If this be so my life,
my brief respites and my long suffering
have reached their end. O cruel separation,

why do you keep me so far from my harm?
My little fable has by now been told,
and in my middle years my time is filled.

255

They wish for night, they hate the coming dawn,
is what untroubled, happy lovers do:
for me the night redoubles woes and weeping;
the morning is for me a happier hour,

when often at the same time those two suns
will open, as it were two Orients
so similar in beauty and in light
that even the heavens fall in love with earth,

as they had done before when the first boughs
were green and in my heart their roots were sunk,
making me love another more than me.

So with me deal those two opposing hours;
it's right I seek the one that gives me peace
and fear and hate the one that brings me pain.

256

Far potess' io vendetta di colei
che guardando et parlando mi distrugge
et, per più doglia, poi s'asconde et fugge,
celando li occhi a me sì dolci et rei! 4

Così li affitti et stanchi spirti mei
a poco a poco consumando sugge,
e 'n sul cor quasi fiero leon rugge
la notte, allor quand' io posar devrei. 8

L'alma, cui morte del suo albergo caccia,
da me si parte; et di tal nodo sciolta
vassene pur a lei che la minaccia. 11

Meravigliomi ben s' alcuna volta,
mentre le parla et piange et poi l'abbraccia,
non rompe il sonno suo, s' ella l'ascolta. 14

257

In quel bel viso ch' i' sospiro et bramo
fermi eran li occhi desiosi e 'ntensi,
quando Amor porse—quasi a dir: "Che pensi?"—
quella onorata man che second' amo. 4

Il cor, preso ivi come pesce a l'amo
onde a ben far per vivo esempio viensi,
al ver non volse li occupati sensi,
o come novo augello al visco in ramo; 8

ma la vista, privata del suo obietto,
quasi sognando si facea far via
senza la qual è 'l suo bene imperfetto. 11

L'alma, tra l'una et l'altra gloria mia,
qual celeste non so novo diletto
et qual strania dolcezza si sentia. 14

256

Could I but take my vengeance on the one
destroying me with glances and with words,
and then, for more pain, who runs off and hides,
concealing from me eyes so sweet and cruel!

And so, my weary and afflicted spirit
little by little she consumes and saps,
and like a lion above my heart there roars
the night, the time when I should be at rest.

My soul, which Death is chasing from its home,
departs from me, and freed from such a knot,
it rushes straight to her who threatens it.

It would indeed surprise me if some time
while speaking, weeping, then embracing her
it did not break her sleep, were she to listen.

257

Upon that lovely face I sigh and yearn for,
my eyes intense and full of wish were fixed,
when Love, as if to say "What's wrong?" stretched out
that honored hand which is my second love.

My heart, now caught there like a fish on hook—
where he finds virtue living as example—
or like a young bird snared by sticky branch,
his busied senses did not turn to truth;

but then my sight, deprived now of its object,
as if within a dream, cleared its own way,
without which its own good remains imperfect.

My soul, between one glory and the other,
who knows what new and heavenly delight,
what supernatural sweetness felt inside.

258

Vive faville uscian de' duo bei lumi
ver me sì dolcemente folgorando,
et parte d'un cor saggio, sospirando,
d'alta eloquenzia sì soavi fiumi,

che pur il rimembrar par mi consumi,
qualor a quel dì torno, ripensando
come venieno i miei spirti mancando
al variar de' suoi duri costumi.

L'alma nudrita sempre in doglia e 'n pene
(quanto è 'l poder d'una prescritta usanza!)
contra 'l doppio piacer sì 'nferma fue

ch' al gusto sol del disusato bene,
tremando or di paura or di speranza,
d'abandonarme fu spesso entra due.

259

Cercato ò sempre solitaria vita—
le rive il sanno et le campagne e i boschi—
per fuggir questi ingegni sordi et loschi
che la strada del Cielo ànno smarrita;

et se mia voglia in ciò fusse compita,
fuor del dolce aere de' paesi toschi
ancor m'avria tra' suoi bei colli foschi
Sorga, ch' a pianger et cantar m'aita.

Ma mia fortuna, a me sempre nemica,
mi risospigne al loco ov' io mi sdegno
veder nel fango il bel tesoro mio;

a la man ond' io scrivo è fatta amica
a questa volta, et non è forse indegno:
Amor sel vide, et sa 'l Madonna et io.

258

From those two lovely lights came living sparks
like lightning sweetly striking out at me,
and at the same time from a wise heart, sighing,
poured such a gentle stream of lofty words

that just the thought of it consumes me still,
when I recall that day and start to think
how all my spirits then began to swoon
under the change in her accustomed harshness.

The soul, nourished always in grief and pain
(how great the power of habitualness!),
struck by the double pleasure, felt so weak

at the mere taste of unaccustomed good,
now trembling with fear and now with hope,
threatened to leave me often in between.

259

I've always sought a solitary life—
the shores, the meadows and the woods know this—
to run away from deaf and devious minds
that have betrayed the path that leads to Heaven;

and if my wishes were fulfilled in this,
outside of the sweet air of Tuscany,
Sorgue, there along its lovely, shady hills,
would have me still and help me weep and sing.

But fortune which has always been my foe,
pushes me back to where I fill with anger
to see my lovely treasure in the mud;

and with this hand by which I write it has,
this once, made friends—and perhaps justly so:
Love saw to it, my lady and I know this.

260

In tale stella duo belli occhi vidi,
tutti pien d'onestate et di dolcezza,
che presso a quei d'Amor leggiadri nidi
il mio cor lasso ogni altra vista sprezza. 4

Non si pareggi a lei qual più s'aprezza
in qual ch' etade, in quai che strani lidi:
non chi recò con sua vaga bellezza
in Grecia affanni, in Troia ultimi stridi, 8

no la bella romana che col ferro
apre il suo casto et disdegnoso petto,
non Polissena, Isifile et Argia. 11

Questa eccellenzia è gloria, s' i' non erro,
grande a Natura; a me sommo diletto,
ma che ven tardo et subito va via. 14

261

Qual donna attende a gloriosa fama
di senno, di valor, di cortesia
miri fiso nelli occhi a quella mia
nemica che mia donna il mondo chiama. 4

Come s'acquista onor, come Dio s'ama,
come è giunta onestà con leggiadria
ivi s'impara, et qual è dritta via
di gir al Ciel, che lei aspetta et brama, 8

ivi 'l parlar che nullo stile aguaglia,
e 'l bel tacere, et quei cari costumi
che 'ngegno uman non po spiegar in carte. 11

L'infinita bellezza ch' altrui abbaglia
non vi s'impara, ché quei dolci lumi
s'acquistan per ventura et non per arte. 14

260

In such a star I saw two lovely eyes
filled full of honesty and loveliness,
that next to those two charming nests of Love
my weary heart disdains all other sights.

No one can equal her, not she most praised
in any age, on any foreign shore:
not even she who with her charming beauty
brought Greece hardship and Troy its final shrieks,

and not the lovely Roman who with iron
opened that chaste, contemptuous breast of hers,
not Polyxena, Hypsipyle, Argeia.

This excellence, if I am right, is Nature's
great glory and for me its highest joy,
but one that's long in coming, quick to flee.

261

Let any lady who wants glorious fame
for having wisdom, virtue, courtesy,
look deep into the eyes belonging to
my enemy called by the world my lady.

How to acquire honor, how God is loved,
how chastity is wed to charming ways,
she'll learn therein, as well as the straight path
to take to Heaven that waits and yearns for her,

and there the speech no style can imitate,
the lovely silences, the cherished ways
which mortal wit cannot explain on paper.

The endless beauty dazzling all of us
she cannot learn therein, for those sweet rays
are gained by destiny and not by art.

262

“Cara la vita, et dopo lei mi pare
vera onestà che ’n bella donna sia.”
“L’ordine volgi; e’ non fur, madre mia,
senza onestà mai cose belle o care,

“et qual si lascia di suo onor privare
né donna è più, né viva; et se qual pria
appare in vista, è tal vita aspra et ria
via più che morte et di più pene amare.

“Nè di Lucrezia mi meravigliai,
se non come a morir le bisognasse
ferro et non le bastasse il dolor solo.”

Vengan quanti filosofi fur mai
a dir di ciò, tutte lor vie fien basse,
et quest’una vedremo alzarsi a volo!

263

Arbor vittoriosa triunfale,
onor d’imperadori et di poeti:
quanti m’ài fatto dì dogliosi et lieti
in questa breve mia vita mortale!

Vera Donna, et a cui di nulla cale
se non d’onor che sovr’ ogni altra mieti,
né d’Amor visco temi o lacci o reti,
né ’nganno altrui contra ’l tuo senno vale:

gentilezza di sangue et l’altre care
cose tra noi, perle et robini et oro,
quasi vil soma egualmente dispregi;

l’alta beltà ch’ al mondo non à pare
noia t’è se non quanto il bel tesoro
di castità par ch’ ella adorni et fregi.

262

"Precious is life, and after it, I think,
true virtue that is found in a fair lady."
"You shift the order, mother, there is nothing
that's fair or dear and is not without virtue,

"and who allows her honor to be taken
is not a lady or alive—if some
appear to be, their life is grim and harsh
much more than death and bitterer with sorrow.

"Lucretia's story still surprises me
because she needed steel so she could die,
and that her grief alone did not suffice."

Let all philosophers that ever were
come speak of this—their ways will all be low,
and hers alone we'll see rise high in flight.

263

O tree triumphal and victorious,
the honor of the emperors and poets,
how many days of grief and joy you gave me
in this brief life of my mortality!

Lady of truth who cares for nothing but
the honor which you reap above all others,
nor do you fear Love's viscous snares or nets,
nor can deceit avail against your wisdom!

Gentility of blood and other cherished
things we possess, rubies and pearls and gold,
like useless weight you equally despise.

Your lofty beauty, unequalled in the world,
bores you, except that it seems to adorn
and crown the lovely treasure of your chasteness.

264

I' vo pensando, et nel penser m'assale
una pietà sì forte di me stesso
che mi conduce spesso
ad altro lagrimar ch' i' non soleva:
ché vedendo ogni giorno il fin più presso,
mille fiate ò chieste a Dio quell'ale
co le quai del mortale
carcer nostr'intelletto al Ciel si leva. 8
Ma infin a qui niente mi releva
prego o sospiro o lagrimar ch' io faccia;
et così per ragion conven che sia,
ché chi possendo star cadde tra via
degno è che mal suo grado a terra giaccia. 13
Quelle pietose braccia
in ch' io mi fido veggio aperte ancora,
ma temenza m'accora
per gli altrui esempli, et del mio stato tremo,
ch' altri mi sprona et son forse a l'estremo. 18

L'un penser parla co la mente, et dice:
"Che pur agogni? onde soccorso attendi?
Misera, non intendi
con quanto tuo disnore il tempo passa?
Prendi partito accortamente, prendi,
et del cor tuo divelli ogni radice
del piacer che felice
nol po mai fare et respirar nol lassa. 26
"Se già è gran tempo fastidita et lassa
se' di quel falso dolce fuggitivo
che 'l mondo traditor può dare altrui,
a che ripon' più la speranza in lui?
ché d'ogni pace et di fermezza è privo. 31
Mentre che 'l corpo è vivo,
ài tu 'l freno in bailia de' penser tuoi.
Deh stringilo or che poi,
ché dubbioso è 'l tardar, come tu sai,
e 'l cominciar non fia per tempo omai. 36

"Già sai tu ben quanta dolcezza porse
agli occhi tuoi la vista di colei,

264

I go on thinking, and I'm seized in thought
by such abundant pity for myself
that often I am led
to weeping for a different kind of grief:
for seeing every day the end come closer,
a thousand times I've begged God for those wings
with which our intellect
can soar to Heaven from this mortal jail.
But until now I have received no help,
no matter how I plead or sigh or weep,
and it is only just that it be so—
if he who can walk straight chooses to fall,
then he deserves to lie upon the ground.
Those arms stretched out in mercy
in which I trust are open to me still,
but I still fear to think
how others ended, and I dread my state
and am spurred on, and it could be too late.

A thought speaks to the mind and it declares:
"You're longing still? What help do you expect?
You poor thing, don't you see
with what dishonor time is passing by?
Make up your mind now, wisely, and decide
to pull out of your heart every last root
of pleasure that can never
bring happiness, nor will it let you breathe.
Since you have long been tired and disgusted
by that false sweetness of a fleeting good,
a gift the treacherous world bestows on some,
why do you still place hope in such a thing
devoid of all peace and stability?
While life is in your body
you have the rein of all thoughts in your hands.
Hold tight now while you can,
for, as you know, delay is dangerous,
and now is not too early to begin.

"How well you know the great amount of sweetness
your eyes have taken from the sight of her,

la qual anco vorrei
ch' a nascer fosse, per più nostra pace.
Ben ti ricordi et ricordar ten dei
de l'imagine sua, quand' ella corse
al cor, là dove forse
non potea fiamma intrar per altrui face.
“Ella l'accese, et se l'ardor fallace
durò molt'anni in aspettando un giorno
che per nostra salute unqua non vene,
or ti solleva a più beata spene
mirando 'l ciel che ti si volve intorno
immortal et adorno;
ché dove del mal suo qua giù sì lieta
vostra vaghezza acqueta
un mover d'occhi, un ragionar, un canto,
quanto fia quel piacer, se questo è tanto?”

Da l'altra parte un pensier dolce et agro,
con faticosa e dilettevol salma
sedendosi entro l'alma,
preme 'l cor di desio, di speme il pasce;
che sol per fama gloriosa et alma
non sente quand' io agghiaccio o quand' io flagro,
s' i' son pallido o magro;
et s' io l'occido più forte rinasce.
Questo d'allor ch' i' m'addormiva in fasce
venuto è di dì in dì crescendo meco,
et temo ch' un sepolcro ambeduo chiuda;
poi che fia l'alma de le membra ignuda
non po questo desio più venir seco.
Ma se 'l latino e 'l greco
parlan di me dopo la morte, è un vento;
ond' io, perché pavento
adunar sempre quel ch' un'ora sgombre,
vorre' 'l ver abbracciar, lassando l'ombre.

Ma quell'altro voler di ch' i' son pieno
quanti press' a lui nascon par ch' adugge,
et parte il tempo fugge
che scrivendo d'altrui di me non calme;
e 'l lume de' begli occhi che mi strugge

the one I wish now were
still to be born, that we may have more peace.
You certainly remember, as you must,
the image of her rushing down into
your heart, there where, perhaps,
the flame of other torches could not enter.
She set it burning, and if the false flame
has lasted many years waiting the day
that for our own salvation never comes,
now raise yourself to a more blessèd hope,
by gazing on the heavens whirling round you,
beautiful and immortal:
if here desire, happy in its ills,
achieves its satisfaction
by a mere glance, a word or two, a song,
what will that joy be like, if this is great?"

There is another thought that's bittersweet
with difficult and yet delightful weight
sitting within my soul
which fills my heart with need and feeds it hope;
only for love of glorious, kindly fame
it does not feel the times I freeze or burn
or if I'm pale or thin;
and killing it makes it grow back the stronger.
This, from the day I slept in baby clothes,
has been growing with me all of my days,
and I fear both of us will share one grave;
for when my soul is naked of its body,
glory's desire cannot accompany it.
If Latin or Greek tongues
praise me when I am dead, it is all wind;
and since I fear to be
always hoarding what in a moment scatters,
I would embrace the truth, and leave the lies.

But then that other passion filling me
seems to block out all others born around it;
meanwhile time flies while I
with no concern for self write for another;
the radiance of those lovely eyes melting me

soavemente al suo caldo sereno
mi ritien con un freno
contra cui nullo ingegno o forza valme.
Che giova dunque perché tutta spalme
la mia barchetta, poi che 'nfra li scogli
è ritenuta ancor da ta' duo nodi?
Tu che dagli altri che 'n diversi modi
legano 'l mondo in tutto mi disciogli,
Signor mio, ché non togli
omai dal volto mio questa vergogna?
Ché 'n guisa d'uom che sogna
aver la morte inanzi gli occhi parme,
et vorrei far difesa et non ò l'arme.

Quel ch' i' fo veggio, et non m'inganna il vero
mal conosciuto, anzi mi sforza Amore
che la strada d'onore
mai nol lassa seguir chi troppo il crede;
et sento ad ora ad or venirmi al core
un leggiadro disdegno aspro et severo
ch' ogni occulto pensero
tira in mezzo la fronte, ov' altri 'l vede.
Ché mortal cosa amar con tanta fede
quanto a Dio sol per debito convensi
più si disdice a chi più pregio brama.
Et questo ad alta voce anco richiama
la ragione sviata dietro ai sensi;
ma perch' ell' oda et pensi
tornare, il mal costume oltre la spigne
et agli occhi depigne
quella che sol per farmi morir nacque,
perch' a me troppo et a se stessa piacque.

Né so che spazio mi si desse il cielo
quando novellamente io venni in terra
a soffir l'aspra guerra
che 'ncontra me medesmo seppi ordire,
né posso il giorno che la vita serra
antiveder per lo corporeo velo;
ma variarsi il pelo
veggio, et dentro cangiarsi ogni desire.

mellifluously in warmth of clarity
has hold of me with reins
against which neither wit nor might avails.
So then what good is it for me to oil
my boat when it is caught upon a reef
and still tied up so tight by those two knots?
You, who from other knots that bind the world
in different ways have liberated me,
my Lord, why do you not,
once and for all, wipe from my face this shame?
For like a man who dreams
I seem to see Death standing there before me,
and I would fight for life, and have no weapons.

I know myself, and I am not deceived
by a mistaken truth; I'm forced by Love
who blocks the path of honor
for anyone who trusts too much in him;
I feel enter my heart from time to time
a virtuous disdain, harsh and severe,
which pulls all hidden thoughts
up to my brow for everyone to see.
To love a mortal thing with such great faith,
the kind that should be placed in God alone,
is less becoming the more one looks for worth.
And this in a loud voice also calls back
my reason which went wandering with the senses;
but though it hears and means
to come back home, bad habit drives it further
and paints before my eyes
the one born only so that I may die
because she pleased me, and herself, too much.

Nor do I know how much space Heaven gave me
when freshly new I came upon the earth
to suffer that harsh war
that I managed to start against myself;
nor can I through my body's veil foresee
the day that must arrive to close my life;
but I see my hair changing
and within me all of my desires aging.

Or ch' i' mi credo al tempo del partire
esser vicino o non molto da lunge,
come chi 'l perder face accorto et saggio
vo ripensando ov' io lassai 'l viaggio
da la man destra ch' a buon porto aggiunge: 121
et da l'un lato punge
vergogna et duol che 'ndietro mi rivolve,
dall'altro non m'assolve
un piacer per usanza in me sì forte
ch' a patteggiar n'ardisce co la Morte. 126

Canzon, qui sono ed ò 'l cor via più freddo
de la paura che gelata neve,
sentendomi perir senz' alcun dubbio,
ché pur deliberando ò vòlto al subbio
gran parte omai de la mia tela breve; 131
né mai peso fu greve
quanto quel ch' i' sostengo in tale stato
che co la Morte a lato
cerco del viver mio novo consiglio,
et veggio 'l meglio et al peggior m'appiglio. 136

Now that I feel the time for my departure
approaches—it cannot be far away—
as he whose loss makes him wary and wise,
I think back to the point it was I left
the right road leading to the port of good:
on one side I am pierced
by shame and sorrow, and they turn me back:
the other will not free me
from pleasure which through time has grown so strong
that it dares bargain now with Death itself.

Song, this is how I live and my heart is
colder with fear than snow that's turned to ice,
feeling for certain that I am perishing;
in trying to decide I've wound the spool
by now with a good length of my short thread;
never was there a weight
heavier than the one I carry now,
for with Death at my side
I seek new rules by which to lead my life,
and see the best, but still cling to the worst.

265

Aspro core et selvaggio et cruda voglia
in dolce umile angelica figura,
se l'impreso rigor gran tempo dura,
avran di me poco onorata spoglia;

ché quando nasce et mor fior erba et foglia,
quando è 'l dì chiaro et quando è notte oscura,
piango ad ogni or. Ben ò di mia ventura,
di Madonna, et d'Amore onde mi doglia.

Vivo sol di speranza, rimembrando
che poco umor già per continua prova
consumar vidi marmi et pietre salde:

non è sì duro cor che lagrimando,
pregando, amando talor non si smova,
né sì freddo voler che non si scalde.

266

Signor mio caro, ogni pensier mi tira
devoto a veder voi cui sempre veggio;
la mia fortuna (or che mi po far peggio?)
mi tene a freno et mi travolve et gira;

poi quel dolce desio ch' Amor mi spira
menami a morte ch' i' non me n'aveggio;
et mentre i miei duo lumi indarno cheggio,
dovunque io son dì et notte si sospira.

Carità di signore, amor di donna
son le catene ove con molti affanni
legato son, perch' io stesso mi strinsi;

un lauro verde, una gentil colonna
quindeci l'una et l'altro diciotto anni
portato ò in seno, et giamai non mi scinsi.

265

A fierce, ungracious heart, a cruel will
in a sweet, humble and angelic form,
if this harsh attitude of hers lasts long,
shall have my spoils that bring her little honor;

when flowers, leaf and grass first bud and die,
when day is bright and when the night is dark,
I weep through every hour. I have good cause
to grieve about my lady, love and fate.

I live on hope alone, remembering
that I have seen a constant drop of water
wear its way through a stone or piece of marble;

no heart exists that is so hard that weeping,
imploring, loving cannot sometime move,
no will so cold that it cannot be warmed.

266

Dear lord of mine, my every thought draws me
devoutly to see you I always see;
but fortune now (how could it treat me worse?)
holds me back, turns and overthrows me;

and the sweet wish that Love breathes into me
leads me to death I scarcely am aware of,
and calling out for my two lights in vain,
wherever I am night and day, I sigh.

Devotion to a lord, love of a lady,
are chains with which I'm bound to so much labor,
and it was I, myself, who tightened them.

A Laurel that is green, a Column noble,
the one for fifteen years, eighteen the other,
I've kept inside me never having parted.

267

Oimè il bel viso, oimè il soave sguardo,
oimè il leggiadro portamento altero!
Oimè il parlar ch' ogni aspro ingegno et fero
facevi umile ed ogni uom vil, gagliardo! 4

Et oimè il dolce riso onde uscio 'l dardo
di che morte, altro bene omai non spero!
Alma real dignissima d'impero
se non fossi fra noi scesa sì tardo: 8

per voi conven ch' io arda e 'n voi respiro,
ch' i' pur fui vostro; et se di voi son privo
via men d'ogni sventura altra mi dole; 11

di speranza m'empieste et di desire
quand' io parti' dal sommo piacer vivo,
ma 'l vento ne portava le parole. 14

268

Che debb' io far? che mi consigli, Amore?
Tempo è ben di morire,
ed ò tardato più ch' i' non vorrei.
Madonna è morta et à seco il mio core,
et volendol seguire,
interromper conven quest'anni rei, 6
perché mai veder lei
di qua non spero, e l'aspettar m'è noia
poscia ch' ogni mia gioia
per lo suo dipartire in pianto è volta,
ogni dolcezza de mia vita è tolta. 11

Amore, tu 'l senti, ond' io teco mi doglio,
quant' è 'l danno aspro et grave;
et so che del mio mal ti pesa et dole,
anzi del nostro, perch' ad uno scoglio
avem rotto la nave,
et in un punto n'è scurato il sole. 17

267

O God! that lovely face, that gentle look,
O God! that charming way of hers, so proud!
O God! those words that any wild, harsh heart
could tame and cowards turn to courageous men!

And, O God, that sweet smile whence came the arrow
of death, the only good I hope for now!
Royal soul, the worthiest of all to rule,
if only you had not joined us so late:

it is for you I burn, in you I breathe
for I am yours alone; deprived of you,
I suffer less for all my other pains;

with hope you filled me once and with desire
the time I left that highest charm alive,
but all those words were scattered in the wind.

268

What will I do? Can you advise me, Love?
Now is the time to die,
and I have put it off more than I should.
My lady's dead and with her is my heart;
for me to follow it
I'll have to interrupt these worst of times,
because I cannot hope
to ever see her here, and waiting's pain
since every joy of mine
has turned to tears the moment she departed,
and all the sweetness in my life is gone.

Love, you too feel—so I complain to you—
how heavy and how bitter is my loss;
I know you're pained and grieving for my grief,
or rather ours, because on the same rock
we both have wrecked our ship
and seen the sun turn dark at the same time.

Qual ingegno a parole
poria aguagliare il mio doglioso stato?
Ahi orbo mondo, ingrato,
gran cagion ài di dover pianger meco,
che quel bel ch' era in te perduto ài seco.

Caduta è la tua gloria, et tu nol vedi,
né degno eri, mentr' ella
visse qua giù, di aver sua conoscenza
né d'esser tocco da' suoi santi piedi,
perché cosa sì bella
devea 'l Ciel adornar di sua presenza.
Ma io, lasso, che senza
lei né la vita mortal né me stesso amo,
piangendo la richiamo:
questo m'avanza di cotanta spene,
et questo solo ancor qui mi mantene.

Oimè, terra è fatto il suo bel viso
che solea far del Cielo
et del ben di lassù fede fra noi!
L'invisibil sua forma è in Paradiso,
disciolta di quel velo
che qui fece ombra al fior degli anni suoi,
per rivestirsen poi
un'altra volta et mai più non spogliarsi,
quando alma et bella farsi
tanto più la vedrem quanto più vale
sempiterna bellezza che mortale.

Più che mai bella et più leggiadra donna
tornami inanzi come
là dove più gradir sua vista sente;
questa è del viver mio l'una colonna,
l'altra è 'l suo chiaro nome,
che sona nel mio cor sì dolcemente.
Ma tornandomi a mente
che pur morta è la mia speranza viva
allor ch' ella fioriva,
sa ben Amor qual io divento, et (spero)
vede 'l colei ch' è or sì presso al vero.

What genius with words
could ever match my sorrowful condition?
Ah, blind, ungrateful world,
how right it is that you should weep with me,
for all the good in you you've lost with her.

Your glory's fallen, and you do not see it,
nor were you worthy while
she lived down here to have made her acquaintance
or to be touched by her angelic feet,
because a thing so lovely
should be adorning Heaven with its presence.
But I, alas, without her,
love neither mortal life nor my own self,
and weeping call her back:
this is what's left to me of so much hope
and this alone still keeps me going here.

Alas, to dust has turned her lovely face
which was the proof among us
of Heaven and the happiness up there!
Her invisible form is there in Paradise,
released now from that veil
which shadowed here the flower of her years
to be reclothed with it
another time never to take it off,
when we see her become
all the more radiant and fair as beauty
eternal is more precious than what lives.

More fair than ever, a more tender lady
she comes back to my mind,
a place she knows the sight of her is welcome;
this is one column that supports my life,
the other is her shining name
which sounds within my heart with so much sweetness.
When I recall to mind
that truly dead now is my hope, alive
while she was flowering,
Love knows what I become, and I hope she
who is so close to truth can see it too.

Donne, voi che miraste sua beltate
et l'angelica vita
con quel celeste portamento in terra:
di me vi doglia, et vincavi pietate;
non di lei, ch' è salita
a tanta pace, et m'à lassato in guerra 61
tal che s' altri mi serra
lungo tempo il cammin da seguitarla,
quel ch' Amor meco parla
sol mi riten ch' io non recida il nodo.
Ma e' ragiona dentro in cotal modo: 66

"Pon freno al gran dolor che ti trasporta,
ché per soverchie voglie
si perde 'l Cielo ove 'l tuo core aspira,
"dove è viva colei ch' altrui par morta
et di sue belle spoglie
seco sorride et sol di te sospira, 72
"et sua fama, che spira
in molte parti ancor per la tua lingua,
prega che non estingua,
anzi la voce al suo nome rischiari,
se gli occhi suoi ti fur dolci né cari." 77

Fuggi 'l sereno e 'l verde,
non t'appressare ove sia riso o canto,
canzon mia, no, ma pianto;
non fa per te di star fra gente allegra,
vedova sconsolata in veste negra. 82

Ladies, you who have wondered at her beauty
and her angelic life,
her attitude divine down here on earth,
grieve now for me, let pity vanquish you,
but not for her who rose
to such great peace and left me here at war;
so that if I am kept
for a long time from following her path,
it is what Love tells me
alone that will not let me cut the knot.
He speaks to me within in such a way:

"Control the pain which carries you away,
for through excessive passion
you'll lose the Heaven your heart aspires to,
where she lives who to others now seems dead,
and at her fair remains
she smiles within and sighs only for you,
and then her fame which lives
in many places, thanks to your own tongue,
she begs not be extinguished,
but rather with her name brighten your voice,
if ever you once cherished her sweet eyes."

Flee the clear weather and green fields,
do not go near where there is song and laughter,
no, my song, go where there's weeping;
you are not fit for happy company,
a widow dressed in black, disconsolate.

269

Rotta è l'alta colonna e 'l verde lauro
che facean ombra al mio stanco pensero;
perduto ò quel che ritrovar non spero
dal borea a l'austro o dal mar indo al mauro. 4

Tolto m'ài, Morte, il mio doppio tesauro
che mi fea viver lieto et gire altero,
et ristorar nol po terra né impero,
né gemma oriental né forza d'auro. 8

Ma se consentimento è di destino,
che posso io più se no aver l'alma trista,
umidi gli occhi sempre, e 'l viso chino? 11

O nostra vita ch' è sì bella in vista,
com' perde agevolmente in un matino
quel che 'n molti anni a gran pena s'acquista. 14

270

Amor, se vuo' ch' i' torni al giogo antico,
come par che tu mostri, un'altra prova
meravigliosa et nova
per domar me conventi vincer pria.
Il mio amato tesoro in terra trova,
che m' è nascosto, ond' io son sì mendico,
e 'l cor saggio pudico
ove suol albergar la vita mia; 8
et s' egli è ver che tua potenzia sia
nel Ciel sì grande come si ragiona
et ne l'abisso (perché qui fra noi
quel che tu val' et puoi
credo che 'l sente ogni gentil persona),
ritogli a Morte quel ch' ella n'à tolto
et ripon le tue insegne nel bel volto. 15

269

Broken are the lofty column and green laurel
that for my weary cares provided shade;
I've lost what I can never hope to find,
from Boreas to Auster, Indian to Moorish Sea.

You've taken from me, Death, my double treasure
that let me live with joy and walk with pride,
and neither earth nor kingdom can restore it,
nor oriental gem nor gold's own power.

But if this is the wish of destiny,
how can my soul be anything but sad,
my eyes forever wet, my head bent low?

O life of ours apparently so lovely,
how easily we lose in just one morning
what we gained with great pain over the years.

270

Love, if you'd have me wear the ancient yoke
again, as it seems you would, another test
astonishing and new
you'll have to pass in order to subdue me.
Find my beloved treasure in the earth,
hidden from me and leaving me so poor,
and find that wise, chaste heart,
the place my life was wont to make its home;
and if it's true your power is as great
in Heaven, as men have said it is, as well
as the Abyss (for here among us all
your power and your worth
I think is felt by every gracious soul),
take back from Death the thing it took from us,
your colors raise again on her fair face.

Riponi entro 'l bel viso il vivo lume
ch' era mia scorta, et la soave fiamma
ch' ancor, lasso, m'infiamma
essendo spenta. Or che fea dunque ardendo?
E' non si vide mai cervo né damma
con tal desio cercar fonte né fiume
qual io il dolce costume
onde ò già molto amaro; et più n'attendo,
se ben me stesso et mia vaghezza intendo,
che mi fa vaneggiar sol del pensero
et gire in parte ove la strada manca,
et co la mente stanca
cosa seguir che mai giugner non spero.
Or al tuo richiamar venir non degno,
che segnoria non ài fuor del tuo regno.

Fammi sentir de quell'aura gentile
di for, sì come dentro ancor si sente,
la qual era possente,
cantando, d'acquetar li sdegni et l'ire,
di serenar la tempestosa mente
et sgombrar d'ogni nebbia oscura et vile,
ed alzava il mio stile
sovra di sé dove or non poria gire.
Aguaglia la speranza col desire,
et poi che l'alma è in sua ragion più forte,
rendi agli occhi, agli orecchi il proprio oggetto
senza qual imperfetto
è lor oprare e 'l mio vivere è morte.
Indarno or sovra me tua forza adopre
mentre 'l mio primo amor terra ricopre.

Fa' ch' io riveggia il bel guardo ch' un sole
fu sopra 'l ghiaccio ond' io solea gir carco;
fa' ch' i' ti trovi al varco
onde senza tornar passò 'l mio core;
prendi i dorati strali et prendi l'arco,
et facciamisi udir sì come sole
col suon de le parole
ne le quali io imparai che cosa è amore.
Movi la lingua ov' erano a tutt'ore
disposti gli ami ov' io fui preso et l'esca

Put back in her fair eyes the living light
that was my guide and the endearing flame
which still, alas, inflames me,
though spent. Oh what it did while it still burned!
One never saw a doe or stag in search
of spring or river with so much desire
as I seek those sweet ways
which gave me so much pain, and more to come,
since well I know myself and how I yearn,
which merely thinking of it drives me mad
and takes me down a path that leads nowhere,
and with my weary mind
follows a thing I never hope to reach.
I do not deign to answer to your call,
you have no power outside your own kingdom.

Around me let me feel that gentle aura
as I still feel it here inside of me,
aura which had the power,
singing, to quiet all disdain and anger,
to make serene the mind tempestuous
and clear it of all dark and heavy mist,
to lift my style to heights
beyond itself where now it cannot reach.
Make equal now my hope to my desire,
and since the soul is stronger in its rights,
give back to eyes and ears their proper object
without which thing imperfect
their functioning is, and my life is a death.
In vain now you exert your force on me,
While my first love is covered by the earth.

Let me behold again that lovely glance
that was sunlight on ice that weighed me down;
be at the passageway
through which my heart passed never to return;
pick up your golden arrows, take the bow,
and let me hear, as once I heard her speak
with sounding of those words
from which I learned what love is all about.
And move that tongue where there were ever set
those hooks that always caught me and the bait

ch' i' bramo sempre; e i tuoi lacci nascondi
fra i capei crespi et biondi,
ché 'l mio volere altrove non s'invesca;
spargi co le tue man le chiome al vento,
ivi mi lega, et puo' mi far contento.

Dal laccio d'or non sia mai chi me scioglia
negletto ad arte, e 'nnanellato et irto,
né de l'ardente spirto
de la sua vista dolcemente acerba,
la qual dì et notte più che lauro o mirto
tenea in me verde l'amorosa voglia
quando si veste et spoglia
di fronde il bosco et la campagna d'erba.
Ma poi che Morte è stata sì superba
che spezzò il nodo ond' io temea scampare,
né trovar poi quantunque gira il mondo
di che ordischi 'l secondo,
che giova, Amor, tuoi ingegni ritentare?
Passata è la stagion, perduto ài l'arme
di ch' io tremava: ormai che puoi tu farme?

L'arme tue furon gli occhi onde l'accese
saette uscivan d'invisibil foco,
et ragion temean poco
ché 'ncontra 'l Ciel non val difesa umana,
il pensar e 'l tacer, il riso e 'l gioco,
l'abito onesto e 'l ragionar cortese,
le parole che 'ntese
avrian fatto gentil d'alma villana,
l'angelica sembianza umile et piana
ch' or quinci or quindi udia tanto lodarsi,
e 'l sedere et lo star che spesso altrui
poser in dubbio a cui
devesse il pregio di più laude darsi:
con quest'armi vincevi ogni cor duro;
or se' tu disarmato, i' son securo.

Gli animi ch' al tuo regno il cielo inchina
leghi ora in uno et ora in altro modo,
ma me sol ad un nodo
legar potei, ché 'l ciel di più non volse.

I always long for; and then hide your snares
in her hair blond and curly,
for only there my longings are entwined;
with your hands spread her locks upon the wind
and bind me there, and you will make me happy.

No one shall free me from that golden snare,
neglected artfully and thick with ringlets,
nor from the burning spirit
within her eyes, a light that's sweetly cruel,
that more than myrtle, laurel, day and night
kept green inside of me my amorous passion,
when woods put on or lose
their leaves and all the countryside its green.
But since Death acted with so much bold pride,
breaking the knot from which I feared escape,
nor can you find, though you may search the world,
a second knot to tie,
why bother, Love, to ply your art again?
Past is the season, you have lost the arms
that made me tremble: now what can you do?

Your arms were eyes from which shot forth those arrows
lit with invisible fires, and they had
little to fear from reason—
human defense is worthless against Heaven;
the pensiveness and silence, play and laughter,
the gracious disposition, the courteous ways,
the words once understood
that would have made the savage soul a noble,
the look of angels, humble and submissive,
heard praised abundantly from here and there,
and then the way she sat, the way she stood
often left one in doubt
which of the two deserved the greatest praise:
every hard heart you vanquished with these arms,
and now you are disarmed and I am safe.

Those souls the heavens incline to your domain
you bind to you in one way or another,
but me in just one knot
you had to bind—the heavens ordained no more.

Quell'uno è rotto e 'n libertà non godo
ma piango et grido: "Ahi, nobil pellegrina,
qual sentenzia divina
me legò innanzi et te prima disciolse? 98
"Dio, che sì tosto al mondo ti ritolse,
ne mostrò tanta et sì alta virtute
solo per infiammar nostro desio."
Certo omai non tem' io,
Amor, de la tua man nove ferute;
indarno tendi l'arco, a voito scocchi:
sua virtù cadde al chiuder de' begli occhi. 105

Morte m'à sciolto, Amor, d'ogni tua legge;
quella che fu mia donna al Ciel è gita,
lasciando trista et libera mia vita. 108

271

L'ardente nodo ov' io fui, d'ora in ora
contando, anni ventuno interi preso
Morte disciolse, né giamai tal peso
provai, né credo ch' uom di dolor mora. 4

Non volendomi Amor perdere ancora,
ebbe un altro lacciuol fra l'erba teso
et di nova esca un altro foco acceso,
tal ch' a gran pena indi scampato fora. 8

Et se non fosse esperienzia molta
de' primi affanni, i' sarei preso et arso
tanto più quanto son men verde legno. 11

Morte m'à liberato un'altra volta
et rotto 'l nodo, e 'l foco à spento et sparso,
contra la qual non val forza né 'ngegno. 14

That one is broken; freedom's not my joy;
instead I weep and cry: "Ah, noble pilgrim,
what kind of holy judgment bound me up first
and let you go before?
God who so soon took you back from the world
showed us his virtue lofty, so immense,
only to make us burn more with desire."
I surely fear no longer,
Love, any other new wounds from your hand;
in vain you bend the bow, you shoot and miss:
its power failed when her fair eyes were closed.

Death has freed me, Love, from all your laws;
that one who was my lady went to Heaven
leaving my life most sorrowfully free.

271

The burning knot which hour after hour
bound me for twenty-one entire years
Death has untied; I never felt such grief,
and now I know man cannot die of sorrow.

Love, not yet willing to let go of me,
had set another snare within the grass
and with new tinder lit another fire
making it very hard for me to flee.

If not for the long trial of my first labors,
I would be caught and burning all the more
for being less green that I had been before.

Death has delivered me another time—
broken the knot, stamped out the scattered fire—
against whom neither force nor wit avails.

272

La vita fugge et non s'arresta un'ora,
et la Morte vien dietro a gran giornate;
et le cose presenti et le passate
mi dànno guerra et le future ancora,

e 'l rimembrare et l'aspettar m'accora
or quinci or quindi; sì che 'n veritate,
se non ch' i' ò di me stesso pietate,
i' sarei già di questi pensier fora.

Tornami avanti s' alcun dolce mai
ebbe 'l cor tristo; et poi da l'altra parte
veggio al mio navigar turbati i venti,

veggio fortuna in porto, et stanco omai
il mio nocchier, et rotte arbore et sarte,
e i lumi bei che mirar soglio spenti.

273

Che fai? che pensi? ché pur dietro guardi
nel tempo che tornar non pote omai?
Anima sconsolata, ché pur vai
giugnendo legno al foco ove tu ardi?

Le soavi parole e i dolci sguardi
ch' ad un ad un descritti et depinti ài
son levati de terra, et è, ben sai,
qui ricercarli intempestivo et tardi.

Deh, non rinovellar quel che n'ancide,
non seguir più penser vago fallace
ma saldo et certo ch' a buon fin ne guide;

cerchiamo 'l Ciel se qui nulla ne piace,
ché mal per noi quella beltà si vide
se viva et morta ne devea tor pace.

272

Life runs away and never rests a moment
and death runs after it with mighty stride,
and present things and things back from the past
and from the future, too, wage war on me:

anticipation, memory weigh down
my heart on either side so that, in truth,
if I did not take pity on myself,
I would, by now, be free of all such thoughts.

What little sweetness my sad heart once felt
comes back to me; but from the other side
I see turbulent winds blowing my sails;

I see a storm in port, and weary now
my helmsman, and my masts and lines destroyed,
and the fair stars I loved to look at, dead.

273

What's going on? What thoughts are these? Why still
look back to times that never can return?
Unhappy soul, why do you keep on heaping
more wood upon the fire burning you?

The gentle words and the enchanting glances
which you described and colored one by one
have been removed from earth; as well you know
it's foolish and too late to seek them here.

Ah, don't renew what tortures us to death;
stop following a vague, deceptive thought;
pursue what's fixed and true that leads to good.

Let's look for Heaven, since nothing pleases here,
for all too badly we have seen that beauty,
alive or dead, must rob us of our peace.

274

Datemi pace, o duri miei pensieri!
non basta ben ch' Amor, Fortuna et Morte
mi fanno guerra intorno e 'n su le porte,
senza trovarmi dentro altri guerreri? 4

Et tu, mio cor, ancor se' pur qual eri?
disleal a me sol, che fere scorte
vai ricettando et se' fatto consorte
de' miei nemici sì pronti et leggieri. 8

In te i secreti suoi messaggi Amore,
in te spiega Fortuna ogni sua pompa,
et Morte la memoria di quel colpo 11

che l'avanzo di me conven che rompa,
in te i vaghi pensier s'arman d'errore:
per che d'ogni mio mal te solo incolpo. 14

275

Occhi miei, oscurato è 'l nostro sole,
anzi è salito al Cielo et ivi splende,
ivi il vedremo, ancora ivi n'attende
et di nostro tardar forse li dole. 4

Orecchie mie, l'angeliche parole
sonano in parte ove è chi meglio intende.
Pie' miei, vostra ragion là non si stende
ov' è colei ch' esercitar vi sole. 8

Dunque perché mi date questa guerra?
Già di perder a voi cagion non fui
vederla, udirla et ritrovarla in terra. 11

Morte biasmate; anzi laudate Lui
che lega et scioglie, e 'n un punto apre et serra,
et dopo 'l pianto sa far lieto altrui. 14

274

Give me some peace, O cruel thoughts of mine!
Isn't it enough that Love, Fortune, and Death
wage war around and at my very gates,
without having to find more foes within?

And you, my heart, are you still what you were?
Disloyal only to me by giving shelter
to cruel spies, and you've become an ally
of my own enemies so quick and ready.

In you does Love display his secret charms,
in you Fortune explains her every pomp,
and Death the recollection of that blow

which must break up whatever's left of me,
in you my restless thoughts are armed with error:
on you alone I blame my every ill.

275

My eyes, that sun of ours has darkened now,
that is, it climbed to Heaven and there it shines;
we'll see it there again, and there it waits
and mourns, perhaps, because of our delay.

My ears, angelic words are sounding there
where there are those who understand them better.
My feet, your jurisdiction does not reach
where she is now, who used to make you move.

So why do you wage war against me now?
I'm not the reason why you can no longer
see her, hear her, or find her here on earth.

Blame Death; or rather praise the One who binds
and frees, the One who opens and who closes,
and after sorrow can restore our joy.

276

Poi che la vista angelica serena
per subita partenza in gran dolore
lasciato à l'alma e 'n tenebroso orrore,
cerco parlando d'allentar mia pena.

Giusto duol certo a lamentar mi mena
(sassel chi n'è cagione, et sallo Amore),
ch' altro rimedio non avea 'l mio core
contra i fastidi onde la vita è piena;

questo un, Morte, m'à tolto la tua mano.
Et tu che copri et guardi et ài or teco,
felice terra! quel bel viso umano:

me dove lasci sconsolato et cieco,
poscia che 'l dolce et amoroso et piano
lume degli occhi miei non è più meco?

277

S' Amor novo consiglio non n'apporta,
per forza converrà che 'l viver cange,
tanta paura et duol l'alma trista ange;
ché 'l desir vive e la speranza è morta,

onde si sbigottisce et si sconforta
mia vita in tutto, et notte et giorno piange
stanca, senza governo in mar che frange,
e 'n dubbia via senza fidata scorta.

Imaginata guida la conduce,
ché la vera è sotterra; anzi è nel Cielo,
onde più che mai chiara al cor traluce,

agli occhi no, ch' un doloroso velo
contende lor la disiata luce
et me fa sì per tempo cangiar pelo.

276

Since the serene, angelic sight of her
has with its quick departure left my soul
in greatest pain and in the shade of horror,
I try by speaking to slow down my pain.

For sure it is just grief drives me to grieve
(who caused it knows, and Love knows it as well),
for my heart knew no other way to cure
all of those ills of which life is so full.

This one cure, Death, your hand has snatched from me.
And you who cover, guard, and hold with you,
fortunate earth, that lovely, human face,

where do you leave me, comfortless and blind,
now that the sweet and amorous and mild
light of my eyes no longer is with me?

277

If Love does not give me some new advice,
I shall be forced to change my life with death,
such fear and grief afflict my saddened soul
because desire lives and hope is dead,

and so bewildered, unconsoled my life
is totally, that night and day it weeps,
weary without a helm in stormy seas
and on a dubious course with no true guide.

An imaginary guide is driving it,
the true one's underground—no, she's in Heaven
whence she shines even brighter through my heart,

not through my eyes, because a veil of sorrow
forbids them to behold the longed-for light
and turns my hair to grey before it's time.

278

Ne l'età sua più bella et più fiorita,
quando aver suol Amor in noi più forza,
lasciando in terra la terrena scorza
è l'aura mia vital da me partita 4

et viva et bella et nuda al Ciel salita;
indi mi signoreggia, indi mi sforza.
Deh, perché me del mio mortal non scorza
l'ultimo dì, ch' è primo a l'altra vita, 8

che, come i miei pensier dietro a lei vanno,
così leve espedita et lieta l'alma
la segua, et io sia fuor di tanto affanno? 11

Ciò che s'indugia è proprio per mio danno,
per far me stesso a me più grave salma.
O che bel morir era, oggi è terzo anno! 14

279

Se lamentar augelli, o verdi fronde
mover soavemente a l'aura estiva,
o roco mormorar di lucide onde
s'ode d'una fiorita et fresca riva 4

là 'v' io seggia d'amor pensoso et scriva,
lei che 'l Ciel ne mostrò, terra n'asconde
veggio et odo et intendo, ch' ancor viva
di sì lontano a' sospir miei risponde. 8

"Deh, perché inanzi 'l tempo ti consume?"
mi dice con pietate. "A che pur versi
degli occhi tristi un doloroso fiume? 11

"Di me non pianger tu, ch' e' miei dì fersi,
morendo, eterni; et ne l'interno lume,
quando mostrai de chiuder, gli occhi apersi." 14

278

In her loveliest age, while in full bloom,
when Love is wont to reach its peak of power,
leaving her earthly vesture to the earth,
my living aura took her leave from me,

and living, lovely, naked rose to Heaven:
from there she rules, from there she drains my strength.
Ah, why is not my mortal part divested
by my last day, the first of the next life;

then, as my thoughts go following after her
so, light, unburdened, joyful would my soul
go after her and I be out of trouble?

All the delay is truly to my loss,
and makes my corpse much heavier to carry.
How sweet a death three years ago today!

279

If sound of birds complaining or green leaves
that rustle gently in a summer breeze,
or the faint murmuring of transparent waves,
I hear from a shore fresh with flowers blooming,

while sitting there with love in thought and writing,
the one whom Heaven showed us and earth hides,
I see and hear and feel, for still alive,
so far away she answers to my sighs.

"Why do you waste away before your time?"
she asks me pityingly. "Why do you still
pour forth from your sad eyes a stream of sorrow?

"Don't weep for me, for my day has become
through death eternal; into internal light
my eyes were opened when they seemed to close."

280

Mai non fui in parte ove sì chiar vedessi
quel che veder vorrei poi ch' io nol vidi,
né dove in tanta libertà mi stessi,
né 'mpiessi il ciel de sì amorosi stridi; 4

né giamai vidi valle aver sì spessi
luoghi da sospirar riposti et fidi,
né credo già ch' Amore in Cipro avessi
o in altra riva sì soavi nidi. 8

L'acque parlan d'amore, et l'òra e i rami,
et gli augelletti e i pesci e i fiori et l'erba,
tutti inseme pregando ch' i' sempre ami. 11

Ma tu, ben nata, che dal Ciel mi chiami,
per la memoria di tua morte acerba
preghi ch' i' sprezzi 'l mondo e i suoi dolci ami. 14

281

Quante fiate al mio dolce ricetto
fuggendo altrui et, s' esser po, me stesso
vo con gli occhi bagnando l'erba e 'l petto,
rompendo co' sospir l' aere da presso! 4

Quante fiate sol, pien di sospetto,
per luoghi ombrosi et foschi mi son messo,
cercando col penser l'alto diletto
che Morte à tolto, ond' io la chiamo spesso! 8

Or in forma di ninfa o d'altra diva
che del più chiaro fondo di Sorga esca
et pongasi a sedere in su la riva, 11

or l'ò veduto su per l'erba fresca
calcare i fior com' una donna viva,
mostrando in vista che di me le 'ncresca. 14

280

I've never found a place where I could see
more clearly what I'd like to see but cannot,
nor where I found myself with so much freedom
or filled the heavens with such cries of love;

nor have I ever seen a valley thicker
with hidden, trusty places made for sighing,
nor do I think Love ever had in Cyprus
or on another shore a sweeter nest.

The waters speak of love, the breeze and branches,
the little birds, the fish, the grass and flowers
all begging me to always be in love.

But you, fortunate one, who calls from Heaven
with memory of your untimely death
beg me to scorn the world with its sweet hooks.

281

How many times I go to my sweet nest,
fleeing others, and if I can, myself,
my eyes bathing my breast, wetting the grass,
and breaking with my sighs the air around me!

How many times alone, all full of fear
have I gone into gloomy, shadowy places
searching in thought for the exalted joy
that Death, on whom I often call, has snatched!

Sometimes in form of nymph or other goddess
arising from the clearest depths of Sorgue
she comes to take her place upon the shore,

sometimes I've seen her there upon fresh grass,
walking on flowers like a living lady,
her face revealing sorrow for my state.

282

Alma felice che sovente torni
a consolar le mie notti dolenti
con gli occhi tuoi, che morte non à spenti
ma sovra 'l mortal modo fatti adorni: 4

quanto gradisco ch' e' miei tristi giorni
a rallegrar de tua vista consenti!
così comincio a ritrovar presenti
le tue bellezze a' suoi usati soggiorni. 8

Là 've cantando andai di te molt'anni
or, come vedi, vo di te piangendo—
di te piangendo no, ma de' miei danni. 11

Sol un riposo trovo in molti affanni,
che quando torni te conosco e 'ntendo
a l'andar, a la voce, al volto, a' panni. 14

283

Discolorato ài, Morte, il più bel volto
che mai si vide, e i più begli occhi spenti;
spirto più acceso di vertuti ardenti
del più leggiadro et più bel nodo ài sciolto. 4

In un momento ogni mio ben m'ài tolto,
post' ài silenzio a' più soavi accenti
che mai s'udiro, et me pien di lamenti:
quant' io veggio m'è noia et quant' io ascolto. 8

Ben torna a consolar tanto dolore
Madonna, ove pietà la riconduce,
né trovo in questa vita altro soccorso; 11

et se come ella parla et come luce
ridir potessi, accenderei d'amore
non dirò d'uom, un cor di tigre o d'orso. 14

282

Soul full of bliss who often comes to me
to soothe my nights of sorrow with your eyes
which Death has not extinguished but has made
more beautiful than any living thing,

how I thank you for granting my sad days
some happiness by showing me your image!
So now I have begun to rediscover
your many beauties where they've always been.

There where I sang of you for many years
now, as you see, I sing for you in tears—
no, not in tears for you but for my loss.

Only one joy I find in all my cares,
that when you come I truly know it's you
from how you walk, your voice, your face, your clothes.

283

You have discolored, Death, the loveliest face
we ever saw and quenched the loveliest eyes;
the brightest spirit with its ardent virtues,
from the most charming, loveliest knot you've loosed.

You've robbed me of my wealth in just one instant,
you've silenced the most gentle sounds of speech
we ever heard and left me with laments:
all that I see, all that I hear is pain.

She does, indeed, return to soothe such sorrow,
Madonna, and it's pity leads her back—
in this life I can find no other help;

and how she speaks and how she shines, if I
could tell you, I could set aflame with love
not only hearts of men but tigers, bears!

284

Sì breve è 'l tempo e 'l penser sì veloce
che mi rendon Madonna così morta,
ch' al gran dolor la medicina è corta:
pur mentr' io veggio lei, nulla mi noce. 4

Amor, che m'à legato et tienmi in croce,
trema quando la vede in su la porta
de l'alma, ove m'ancide ancor sì scorta,
si dolce in vista, et sì soave in voce. 8

Come donna in suo albergo altera vene,
scacciando de l'oscuro et grave core
co la fronte serena i pensier tristi; 11

l'alma, che tanta luce non sostene,
sospira et dice: "O benedette l'ore
del dì che questa via con li occhi apristi!" 14

285

Né mai pietosa madre al caro figlio
né donna accesa al suo sposo diletto
die' con tanti sospir, con tal sospetto
in dubbio stato sì fedel consiglio, 4

come a me quella che 'l mio grave esiglio
mirando dal suo eterno alto ricetto
spesso a me torna co l'usato affetto,
et di doppia pietate ornata il ciglio, 8

or di madre, or d'amante. Or teme or arde
d'onesto foco, et nel parlar mi mostra
quel che 'n questo viaggio fugga o segua, 11

contando i casi de la vita nostra,
pregando ch' a levar l'alma non tarde.
Et sol quant' ella parla ò pace, o tregua. 14

284

So short the time, so rapid is the thought
which give me back Madonna so long dead—
the medicine falls short of such great pain,
yet while I see her nothing bothers me.

Love, who bound me and keeps me on this cross,
trembles to see her there upon the threshold
of the soul, ready to slay me once more,
so sweet the vision, so soft the voice.

As mistress she comes to her home with pride
expelling from a dark and heavy heart
with clearness of her brow all thoughts of sorrow;

the soul that cannot bear so great a light
sighs and then says: “Oh, blessèd be the hours
that make the day your eyes opened the way.”

285

Never did tender mother her dear son
or ardent lady her belovèd spouse
give, sighing so, with such consideration,
such faithful counsel at a doubtful time

as she to me, who watching my grave exile
from her superior, eternal home
often returns to me with the same care
and with her brow adorned with double pity,

now mother and now lover. Now fearing, burning
with a pure fire, she shows me with words
what in this journey I should flee or follow,

explaining things that happen in our life,
begging me not to lift my soul too late.
And only while she speaks I've peace, a truce.

286

Se quell'aura soave de' sospiri
ch' i' odo di colei che qui fu mia
donna (or è in Cielo et ancor par qui sia
et viva et senta et vada et ami et spiri) 4

ritrar potessi, or che caldi desiri
movrei parlando, sì gelosa et pia
torna ov' io son, temendo non fra via
mi stanchi o 'ndietro o da man manca giri. 8

Ir dritto alto m'insegna, et io, che 'ntendo
le sue caste lusinghe e i giusti preghi
col dolce mormorar pietoso et basso, 11

secondo lei conven mi regga et pieghi,
per la dolcezza che del suo dir prendo,
ch' avria vertù di far piangere un sasso. 14

287

Sennuccio mio, benché doglioso et solo
m'abbi lasciato, i' pur mi riconforto,
perché del corpo ov' eri preso et morto
alteramente se' levato a volo. 4

Or vedi inseme l' un et l' altro polo,
le stelle vaghe et lor viaggio torto,
et vedi il veder nostro quanto è corto;
onde col tuo gioir tempro 'l mio duolo. 8

Ma ben ti prego che 'n la terza spera
Guitton saluti, et messer Cino, et Dante,
Franceschin nostro et tutta quella schiera. 11

A la mia donna puoi ben dire in quante
lagrime io vivo et son fatt' una fera,
membrando il suo bel viso et l'opre sante. 14

286

If only those sweet-flowing aura's sighs
that I hear come from her who here was mine,
my lady—now in Heaven, though still here
she lives and feels and walks and loves and breathes—

could I portray them, oh what warm desires
my words would set aflame! so anxious, kind,
she comes back to me fearing that I may
tire on my way, turn back, go the wrong way.

She teaches me to go straight up, and I,
knowing her pure allurements, her just prayers
sweetly murmured beseechingly and low,

must hold myself to her, bend to her rule,
out of the sweetness I take from her words
that have the force to make a stone shed tears.

287

O my Sennuccio, though you've left me grieving
and all alone, I still take comfort knowing
that from the body which enclosed you dead
to lofty heights you raised your wings in flight.

Now you can see both poles at the same time,
the stars that wander and their winding path,
and you can see how short our seeing is,
therefore I temper my grief with your joy.

But do please greet the souls in the third sphere
of messer Cino, Dante, and Guittone,
our Franceschino, and all that company.

And to my lady certainly do mention
how much I live in tears, how wild I am
remembering her fair face and saintly deeds.

288

I' ò pien di sospir quest'aere tutto,
d'aspri colli mirando il dolce piano
ove nacque colei ch' avendo in mano
meo cor in sul fiorire e 'n sul far frutto 4

è gita al Cielo, ed àmmi a tal condutto
col subito partir che di lontano
gli occhi miei stanchi lei cercando invano
presso di sé non lassan loco asciutto. 8

Non è sterpo né sasso in questi monti,
non ramo o fronda verde in queste piagge,
non fiore in queste valli o foglia d'erba, 11

stilla d'acqua non ven di queste fonti,
né fiere àn questi boschi sì selvagge,
che non sappian quanto è mia pena acerba. 14

289

L'alma mia fiamma oltra le belle bella,
ch' ebbe qui 'l Ciel sì amico et sì cortese,
anzi tempo per me nel suo paese
è ritornata et a la par sua stella. 4

Or comincio a svegliarmi, et veggio ch' ella
per lo migliore al mio desir contese
et quelle voglie giovenili accese
temprò con una vista dolce et fella. 8

Lei ne ringrazio e 'l suo alto consiglio
che col bel viso e co' soavi sdegni
fecemi ardendo pensar mia salute. 11

O leggiadre arti et lor effetti degni:
l'un co la lingua oprar, l'altra col ciglio,
io gloria in lei, et ella in me virtute! 14

288

I have filled with my sighs all of this air
gazing from rugged hills at the sweet plain
where she was born who, with my heart in hand
when it first blossomed and when it bore fruit,

has gone to Heaven and left me so distraught
with her quick parting that my weary eyes
that seek her from afar but to no end
leave not a place around them dry of tears.

There is no stick or stone in all these mountains,
no branch or a green leaf upon these shores,
no flower in these vales, no blade of grass,

no drop of water trickles from these springs,
no beasts so savage do these woods contain
that do not know how much my sorrow stings.

289

My lofty flame, beauty beyond all beauty,
to whom Heaven was the kindest friend on earth,
has gone to her own country, though too early,
back to her star that's worthy of her presence.

Now I begin to waken and I see
that it was best that she fought my desire
and tempered all the burning lusts of youth
with countenance that was both bitter, sweet.

For this I thank her and her holy counsel,
that with her lovely face and gentle anger
made me in burning think of my salvation.

O gracious arts and their worthy effects:
one working with the tongue, one with a glance,
I for her glory, she for my well-being.

290

Come va 'l mondo! or mi diletta et piace
quel che più mi dispiacque, or veggio et sento
che per aver salute ebbi tormento,
et breve guerra per eterna pace. 4

O speranza, o desir sempre fallace,
et degli amanti più ben per un cento!
O quant' era il peggior farmi contento
quella ch' or siede in Cielo e 'n terra giace! 8

Ma 'l cieco Amor et la mia sorda mente
mi traviavan sì ch' andar per viva
forza mi convenia dove Morte era: 11

benedetta colei ch' a miglior riva
volse il mio corso et l'empia voglia ardente
lusingando affrenò perch' io non pera! 14

291

Quand' io veggio dal ciel scender l'Aurora
co la fronte di rose et co' crin d'oro,
Amor m'assale ond' io mi discoloro
et dico sospirando: "Ivi è Laura ora. 4

"O felice Titòn, tu sai ben l'ora
da ricovrare il tuo caro tesoro;
ma io che debbo far del dolce alloro?
ché se 'l vo' riveder, conven ch' io mora. 8

"I vostri dipartir non son sì duri,
ch' almen di notte suol tornar colei
che non à schifo le tue bianche chiome; 11

"le mie notti fa triste e i giorni oscuri
quella che n'à portato i penser miei,
né di sé m'à lasciato altro che 'l nome." 14

290

How the world changes! Now I'm charmed and pleased
by what displeased me most; I see and feel
that to be saved I had to be tormented,
fight a short war for everlasting peace.

Oh hope, oh wishes always treacherous,
a hundred times more so for those in love!
How much worse had she made me happy then
who now sits up in Heaven and rests in earth!

But Love that's blind and my own deafened mind
led me so far astray that by their lively
power I was forced to go where Death is found.

Blessèd be she who toward a better shore
turned my life's course, and flattering a will
wicked, aflame, checked it so I not perish.

291

When I see coming down the sky Aurora
with roses on her brow and gold in hair,
Love seizes me and losing all my color
I sigh as I say, "Laura is there now.

"O glad Tithonus, you know when it's time
to hold your precious treasure once again;
but I, what can I do with my sweet laurel?
To see her once again I have to die.

"Your partings aren't so difficult to take—
at least at nighttime she returns to you,
and she does not despise your head of white;

"my nights she saddens and my days she darkens,
the one who carried off my thoughts with her
and left me of herself only her name."

292

Gli occhi di ch' io parlai sì caldamente,
et le braccia et le mani e i piedi e 'l viso
che m'avean sì da me stesso diviso
et fatto singular da l'altra gente, 4

le crespe chiome d'or puro lucente
e 'l lampeggiar de l'angelico riso
che solean fare in terra un paradiso,
poca polvere son che nulla sente. 8

Et io pur vivo, onde mi doglio et sdegno,
rimaso senza 'l lume ch' amai tanto
in gran fortuna e 'n disarmato legno. 11

Or sia qui fine al mio amoroso canto;
secca è la vena de l'usato ingegno,
et la cetera mia rivolta in pianto. 14

293

S' io avesse pensato che sì care
fossin le voci de' sospir miei in rima,
fatte l'avrei dal sospirar mio prima
in numero più spesse, in stil più rare. 4

Morta colei che mi facea parlare
et che si stava de' pensier miei in cima,
non posso, et non ò più sì dolce lima,
rime aspre et fosche far soavi et chiare. 8

Et certo ogni mio studio in quel tempo era
pur di sfogare il doloroso core
in qualche modo, non d'acquistar fama. 11

Pianger cercai, non già del pianto onore;
or vorrei ben piacer, ma quella altera
tacito stanco dopo sé mi chiama. 14

292

Those eyes of which I spoke with such emotion,
the arms and hands and feet and countenance
that had estranged me from my very self
and made me different from all other people,

the curling locks of pure gold glimmering,
the lightning flash of an angelic smile
that used to turn the earth to paradise,
are bits of dust that can feel nothing now.

And I still live, which makes me sad and angry,
left here without the light I loved so much,
in a great storm, a ship that is dismantled.

Let my love song finish right here and now;
dry is the vein of my habitual art,
my lyre now has turned to playing tears.

293

If I had thought the sound of my voice sighing
in verses would turn out to be so dear,
I would have from the first time that I sighed
increased their number, polished more their style.

Dead is the one that used to make me speak,
who stood upon the summit of my thoughts,
so I cannot—my file's no longer sweet—
turn what is rough and dark to smooth and clear.

At that time, certainly, my only care
was to release, somehow, the grief that filled
my heart, and not to win myself some fame.

I sought to weep, not honor from my weeping;
now I would gladly please, but that high one
calls me, silent, weary, after her.

294

Soleasi nel mio cor star bella et viva
com' alta donna in loco umile et basso;
or son fatto io, per l'ultimo suo passo,
non pur mortal, ma morto, et ella è diva. 4

L'alma d'ogni suo ben spogliata et priva,
Amor de la sua luce ignudo et casso,
devrian de la pietà romper un sasso;
ma non è chi lor duol riconti o scriva, 8

ché piangon dentro, ov' ogni orecchia è sorda
se non la mia, cui tanta doglia ingombra
ch' altro che sospirar nulla m'avanza. 11

Veramente siam noi polvere et ombra,
veramente la voglia cieca e 'ngorda,
veramente fallace è la speranza. 14

295

Soleano i miei penser soavemente
di lor oggetto ragionare inseme:
"Pietà s'appressa et del tardar si pente;
forse or parla di noi, o spera o teme." 4

Poi che l'ultimo giorno et l'ore estreme
spogliar di lei questa vita presente,
nostro stato dal Ciel vede, ode et sente;
altra di lei non è rimaso speme. 8

O miracol gentile, o felice alma,
o beltà senza esempio altera et rara
che tosto è ritornata ond' ella uscio! 11

Ivi à del suo ben far corona et palma
quella ch' al mondo sì famosa et chiara
fe' la sua gran vertute e 'l furor mio. 14

294

She, lovely and alive, would fill my heart,
a great lady in a poor and humble home;
now I've become, because she's passed away,
not just mortal, but dead, and she a goddess.

My soul of all its wealth despoiled, deprived,
Love of its light stripped bare and destitute,
could break a stone to pieces out of pity;
but no one can explain or write their pain,

for they lament within where no ear hears
save mine, and I am burdened by such pain
that I am left with nothing but my sighs.

In truth we are nothing but dust and shadow;
in truth desire is both blind and greedy;
in truth all hope turns out to be deceiving.

295

At times some of my thoughts would get together
and softly sweet converse about their object:
"Pity is close, and she regrets delaying;
perhaps she speaks of us now, hopes or fears."

Now that the final day and the last hours
have stripped this present life of her own presence
she sees and hears and feels our state from Heaven—
no other hope of her is left us here.

Oh gracious miracle, oh happy soul!
Oh beauty that's uncopied, rare, sublime
that soon returned to where it first had sprung!

There, crown and palm she has for her good works
who made so bright and famous in the world
her lofty virtue and my own mad passion.

296

I' mi soglio accusare, et or mi scuso,
anzi mi pregio et tengo assai più caro,
de l'onesta pregion, del dolce amaro
colpo ch' i' portai già molt'anni chiuso. 4

Invide Parche, sì repente il fuso
troncaste ch' attorcea soave et chiaro
stame al mio laccio, et quello aurato et raro
strale onde morte piacque oltra nostro uso! 8

Ché non fu d'allegrezza a' suoi dì mai,
di libertà, di vita, alma sì vaga
che non cangiasse 'l suo natural modo, 11

togliendo anzi per lei sempre trar guai
che cantar per qualunque, et di tal piaga
morir contento, et vivere in tal nodo. 14

297

Due gran nemiche inseme erano agiunte,
Bellezza et Onestà, con pace tanta
che mai rebellion l'anima santa
non sentì poi ch' a star seco fur giunte. 4

Et or per Morte son sparse et disgiunte:
l'una è nel Ciel che se ne gloria et vanta,
l'altra sotterra che' begli occhi amanta
onde uscir già tant' amorose punte. 8

L'atto soave, e 'l parlar saggio umile
che movea d'alto loco, e 'l dolce sguardo
che piagava il mio core (ancor l'acenna) 11

sono spariti; et s' al seguir son tardo,
forse averrà che 'l bel nome gentile
consacrerò con questa stanca penna. 14

296

I often would accuse, but now excuse myself,
no, I respect and cherish myself more
thanks to the worthy prison, the sweet-bitter
blow that I've born now many years enclosed.

Envious Fates, so suddenly you broke
the spindle that was spinning soft, bright thread
around my bonds, and that rare golden arrow
for which death is beloved beyond all limits!

For never was there any soul in love
with happiness and liberty and life
that would not change its natural tendency,

choosing rather to moan because of her
than sing for someone else, and from such wounds
to die content and live in such a knot.

297

Two formidable rivals were once joined,
Beauty and Chastity, in such concordance
that conflict in her holy soul was never
felt from the moment they were joined in her.

And now they're scattered and disjoined by Death;
one is in Heaven, glorified, exalted,
one under ground, which mantles those fair eyes
that once released so many darts of love.

The gracious way, the wise and humble speech
that came from a high place, and the sweet glance
that used to wound my heart (it still shows signs)

have vanished; and if I am slow to follow,
perhaps I shall succeed in consecrating
with weary pen her gracious, noble name.

298

Quand' io mi volgo indietro a mirar gli anni
ch' ànno fuggendo i miei penseri sparsi,
et spento 'l foco ove agghiacciando io arsi,
et finito il riposo pien d'affanni, 4

rotta la fé degli amorosi inganni,
et sol due parti d'ogni mio ben farsi,
l'una nel Cielo et l'altra in terra starsi,
et perduto il guadagno de' miei danni, 8

i' mi riscuoto, et trovomi sì nudo
ch' i' porto invidia ad ogni estrema sorte,
tal cordoglio et paura ò di me stesso. 11

O mia Stella, o Fortuna, o Fato, o Morte,
o per me sempre dolce giorno et crudo,
come m'avete in basso stato messo! 14

299

Ov' è la fronte che con picciol cenno
volgea il mio core in questa parte e 'n quella?
Ov' è 'l bel ciglio et l'una et l'altra stella
ch' al corso del mio viver lume denno? 4

Ov' è 'l valor, la conoscenza e 'l senno?
l'accorta, onesta, umil, dolce favella?
Ove son le bellezze accolte in ella
che gran tempo di me lor voglia fenno? 8

Ov' è l'ombra gentil del viso umano
ch' ora et riposo dava a l'alma stanca
et là 've i miei pensier scritti eran tutti? 11

Ov' è colei che mia vita ebbe in mano?
Quanto al misero mondo, et quanto manca
agli occhi miei che mai non fien asciutti! 14

298

When I turn back to look upon those years
that flying by have scattered all my thoughts
and quenched the fire in which I, freezing, burned
and ended my repose so full of woes,

broken the faith of amorous deceptions
and made two separate parts of all my good—
the one in Heaven, the other in the ground—
and lost the profits of my painful gains,

I'm startled and I feel so very naked
that I envy the gravest of misfortunes,
so much I fear and suffer for myself.

O Star of mine, O Chance, O Fate, O Death,
O Day always so sweet yet cruel to me,
to what low state you have reduced me now!

299

Where is the brow that with the slightest movement
could make my heart turn one way or another?
Where are the lovely lashes and two stars
that shed their light upon my way of life?

Where is the valor, the knowledge, and the wit,
the prudent, honest, humble, gracious speech?
Where are the beauties gathered in her person,
that for so long have made of my will theirs?

Where is the gracious image of a face
that to my tired soul gave shade and rest
and where my every thought was once recorded?

Where is the one who had me in her hand?
How much this wretched world, how much my eyes,
that have no hope of drying, miss her now!

300

Quanta invidia io ti porto, avara terra
ch' abbracci quella cui veder m'è tolto
et mi contendi l'aria del bel volto
dove pace trovai d'ogni mia guerra! 4

Quanta ne porto al Ciel che chiude et serra
et sì cupidamente à in sé raccolto
lo spirto da le belle membra sciolto,
et per altrui sì rado si diserra! 8

Quanta invidia a quell'anime che 'n sorte
ànno or sua santa et dolce compagnia,
la qual io cercai sempre con tal brama! 11

Quant' a la dispietata et dura Morte,
ch' avendo spento in lei la vita mia
stassi ne' suoi begli occhi et me non chiama! 14

301

Valle che de' lamenti miei se' piena,
fiume che spesso del mio pianger cresci,
fere selvestre, vaghi augelli, et pesci
che l'una et l'altra verde riva affrena: 4

aria de' miei sospir calda et serena,
dolce sentier che sì amaro riesci,
colle che mi piacesti, or mi rincresci,
ov' ancor per usanza Amor mi mena: 8

ben riconosco in voi l'usate forme,
non, lasso, in me, che da sì lieta vita
son fatto albergo d'infinita doglia. 11

Quinci vedea 'l mio bene, et per queste orme
torno a vedere ond' al Ciel nuda è gita,
lasciando in terra la sua bella spoglia. 14

300

How much I envy you, the greedy earth
embracing her the sight of whom I've lost,
begrudging me the air of her sweet face
where I settled for peace in all my wars!

How much I envy Heaven, that holds and locks
and greedily has gathered to itself
the spirit freed from her exquisite limbs
but that rarely unlocks itself for others!

How much I envy those souls chosen now
to have her sweet and holy company
that I sought endlessly with such desire!

How much that merciless, unfeeling Death,
who having quenched in her my very life,
lives in her lovely eyes, but does not call me!

301

Valley, so filled with my lamenting words,
River, that swells so often with my tears,
beasts of the woods, wandering birds and fish
contained between green shores on either side,

Air, that is warmed and cleared by all my sighs,
sweet path, that leads to so much bitterness,
hill, that once pleased and now displeases me,
where love still leads me as he always did,

how well I see in you your usual traces,
but not, alas, in me who from such gladness
have now become the home of endless grief.

From here I'd see my love, and with these steps
I come to see the place where she went, bare,
to Heaven, leaving to earth her lovely spoils.

302

Levommi il mio penser in parte ov' era
quella ch' io cerco et non ritrovo in terra;
ivi fra lor che 'l terzo cerchio serra
la rividi più bella et meno altera. 4

Per man mi prese et disse: "In questa spera
sarai ancor meco, se 'l desir non erra;
i' so' colei che ti die' tanta guerra
et compie' mia giornata inanzi sera. 8

"Mio ben non cape in intelletto umano;
te solo aspetto, et quel che tanto amasti
et là giuso è rimaso, il mio bel velo." 11

Deh, perché tacque et allargò la mano?
ch' al suon de' detti sì pietosi et casti,
poco mancò ch' io non rimasi in Cielo. 14

303

Amor, che meco al buon tempo ti stavi
fra queste rive a' pensier nostri amiche,
et per saldar le ragion nostre antiche
meco et col fiume ragionando andavi: 4

fior, frondi, erbe, ombre, antri, onde, aure soavi,
valli chiuse, alti colli, et piagge apriche,
porto de l'amorose mie fatiche,
de le fortune mie tante et sì gravi: 8

o vaghi abitator de' verdi boschi,
o ninfe et voi che 'l fresco erboso fondo
del liquido cristallo alberga et pasce: 11

i dì miei fur sì chiari, or son sì foschi
come Morte che 'l fa! così nel mondo
sua ventura à ciascun dal dì che nasce. 14

302

My thought lifted me up to where she was,
the one I seek and cannot find on earth;
there among those enclosed in the third sphere
she looked more lovely, less-proud than before.

She took my hand and said: "Here in this sphere,
desire unerring, you'll be with me again;
I am the one who made you fight so hard
and who ended my day before night came.

"My bliss no human mind can comprehend;
I only wait for you and what you loved
so much, and is down there, my lovely veil."

Ah, why did she stop speaking and drop my hand?
For with the sound of words so kind and chaste
I came quite close to never leaving Heaven!

303

Love, who in those good times would be with me
along these banks, the friends of all our thoughts,
and who, to settle all our old accounts,
would walk and talk with me and with the river;

blooms, leaves, grass, shade, caves, waves, and gentle breezes,
valleys enclosed, high hills, and sprawling slopes,
harbor of all my amorous laborings,
of all my storms, so many and so heavy;

O carefree dwellers of the verdant woods,
O nymphs, and you whose cool and grassy bed
of liquid crystal shelters and gives food:

my days were once so bright, now they are dark
as Death, the cause of it. And so on earth
our destiny is with us from our birth.

304

Mentre che 'l cor dagli amorosi vermi
fu consumato e 'n fiamma amorosa arse,
di vaga fera le vestigia sparse
cercai per poggi solitari et ermi; 4

et ebbi ardir, cantando, di dolermi
d'Amor, di lei che sì dura m'apparse,
ma l'ingegno et le rime erano scarse
in quella etate ai pensier novi e 'nfermi. 8

Quel foco è morto e 'l copre un picciol marmo
che se col tempo fossi ito avanzando
(come già in altri) infino a la vecchiezza, 11

di rime armato ond' oggi mi disarmo,
con stil canuto, avrei fatto parlando
romper le pietre et pianger di dolcezza. 14

305

Anima bella, da quel nodo sciolta
che più bel mai non seppe ordir Natura:
pon dal Ciel mente a la mia vita oscura,
da sì lieti pensieri a pianger volta. 4

La falsa opinion dal cor s'è tolta
che mi fece alcun tempo acerba et dura
tua dolce vista; omai tutta secura
volgi a me gli occhi e i miei sospiri ascolta. 8

Mira 'l gran sasso donde Sorga nasce,
et vedra'vi un che sol tra l'erbe et l'acque
di tua memoria et di dolor si pasce; 11

ove giace il tuo albergo et dove nacque
il nostro amor vo' ch' abbandoni et lasce,
per non veder ne' tuoi quel ch' a te spiacque. 14

304

During that time my heart by loving worms
was all devoured and burned with flames of love,
the scattered footprints of a charming beast
I sought upon the lonely and wild hills;

and I dared in my verses to complain
of Love, of her, who seemed so cruel to me,
but wit and poetry were not so strong
at that age of unstable and strange thoughts.

That fire's dead and covered by meager marble,
but had it gone on growing, as time passed,
as is the case with others, until old age,

armed with the verse I am rejecting now,
with style mature, I would have with my poems
shattered stone, and made it weep with sweetness.

305

Beautiful soul, now loosened from that knot,
the loveliest that nature could create:
from Heaven now give thought to my dark life,
which once in happy thought has turned to tears.

Gone from your heart now is the false opinion
that made at times your sweet appearance turn
severe and cruel toward me; now all secure,
look upon me and listen to my sighs.

Look to the lofty rock where Sorgue is born,
you'll see one there amid the grass and waters
who feeds upon your memory and pain;

the place where your house stands and where our love
was born I want you to abandon, leave,
not to see what displeased you in your people.

306

Quel sol che mi mostrava il cammin destro
di gire al Ciel con gloriosi passi,
tornando al sommo Sole, in pochi sassi
chiuse 'l mio lume e 'l suo carcer terrestro,

ond' io son fatto un animal silvestro
che co' pie vaghi, solitari et lassi
porto 'l cor grave et gli occhi umidi et bassi
al mondo, ch' è per me un deserto alpestro.

Così vo ricercando ogni contrada
ov' io la vidi; et sol tu che m'affligi,
Amor, vien meco et mostrimi ond' io vada;

lei non trov' io, ma suoi santi vestigi
tutti rivolti a la superna strada
veggio, lunge da' laghi averni et stigi.

307

I' pensava assai destro esser su l'ale
(non per lor forza, ma di chi le spiega)
per gir cantando a quel bel nodo eguale
onde Morte m'assolve, Amor mi lega.

Trovaimi a l'opra via più lento et frale
d'un picciol ramo cui gran fascio piega,
et dissi: "A cader va chi troppo sale,
né si fa ben per uom quel che 'l ciel nega."

Mai non poria volar penna d'ingegno,
non che stil grave o lingua, ove Natura
volò tessendo il mio dolce ritegno;

seguilla Amor con sì mirabil cura
in adornarlo,ch' i' non era degno
pur de la vista: ma fu mia ventura.

306

The sun which lit for me the rightful road
that leads the way to Heaven with glorious steps,
back to the highest sun, in a few stones
has closed my light and her own earthly jail,

so I've become a wild beast of the woods,
and with my wandering feet, alone and weary,
I bear a heavy heart, eyes wet and brooding
in a world for me a desert on a cliff.

Thus I go searching through all of those regions
where I saw her; and you, my sole affliction,
Love, come with me and show me where to go;

I do not find her, but her holy footprints
all clearly leading to the road to Heaven
I see, and far from the infernal lakes.

307

I thought my wings were strong enough to soar
(not by their power but by his who spreads them),
in song that's worthy of that lovely knot
from which Death loosens me and Love still binds.

I found myself at work much slower, frailer
than a small branch bent by a heavy burden,
and I said: "He will fall who flies too high,
nor can a man do well what Heaven denies."

Never could feather, though ingenious, fly,
nor learnèd style or words, as high as Nature
flew when she wove my sweet impediment;

Love followed her, and with such marvelous care
adorned her so that I was not fit even
to look—but my good luck allowed me to!

308

Quella per cui con Sorga ò cangiato Arno,
con franca povertà serve ricchezze,
volse in amaro sue sante dolcezze
ond' io già vissi, or me ne struggo et scarno. 4

Da poi più volte ò riprovato indarno
al secol che verrà l'alte bellezze
pinger cantando, a ciò che l'ame et prezze,
né col mio stile il suo bel viso incarno. 8

Le lode, mai non d'altra et proprie sue,
che 'n lei fur come stelle in cielo sparte,
pur ardisco ombreggiare, or una or due; 11

ma poi ch' i' giungo a la divina parte,
ch' un chiaro et breve sole al mondo fue.
ivi manca l'ardir, l'ingegno et l'arte. 14

309

L' alto et novo miracol ch' a' dì nostri
apparve al mondo et star seco non volse,
che sol ne mostrò 'l Ciel, poi sel ritolse
per adornarne i suoi stellanti chiostri, 4

vuol ch' i' depinga a chi nol vide e 'l mostri
Amor, che 'n prima la mia lingua sciolse;
poi mille volte indarno a l'opra volse
ingegno, tempo, penne, carte, enchiostri. 8

Non son al sommo ancor giunte le rime,
in me il conosco, et proval ben chiunque
è 'nfin a qui che d'Amor parli o scriva; 11

chi sa pensare, il ver tacito estime
ch' ogni stil vince, et poi sospire: "Adunque
beati gli occhi che la vider viva!" 14

308

She for whom I exchanged Arno for Sorgue
and servile riches for free poverty,
turned into bitterness her holy sweetness
which fed me once, now leaves me worn and thin.

Since then I often made attempts, in vain,
to capture her high beauty in my verse
so those to come will love and cherish her,
but my style cannot make her fair face live.

The praises that were hers alone, no other's,
hers like the stars that spreading fill the sky,
of them I try to sketch just one or two;

but when I touch upon the part divine
that was a bright but fleeting sun on earth,
my courage fails, my wit, and then my art.

309

The high, new miracle that in our time
appeared on earth but did not want to stay,
that Heaven merely showed us then took back
to decorate the cloisters of its stars,

Love, who once he'd given freedom to my tongue,
then put to work a thousand times in vain
talent and time and pens and ink and paper,
wants me to paint for those who have not seen.

My poetry is not yet at its highest,
I know this deep within, as anyone
who wrote or spoke of Love till now well knows.

He who can think, now think the silent truth
surpassing every style, and sigh: "Well, then,
God blessed those eyes that saw her still alive!"

310

Zefiro torna e 'l bel tempo rimena
e i fiori et l'erbe, sua dolce famiglia,
et garrir Progne et pianger Filomena,
et Primavera candida et vermiglia; 4

ridono i prati e 'l ciel si rasserena,
Giove s'allegra di mirar sua figlia,
l'aria et l'acqua et la terra è d'amor piena,
ogni animal d'amar si riconsiglia. 8

Ma per me, lasso, tornano i più gravi
sospiri che del cor profondo tragge
quella ch' al Ciel se ne portò le chiavi; 11

et cantar augelletti, et fiorir piagge,
e 'n belle donne oneste atti soavi
sono un deserto et fere aspre et selvagge. 14

311

Quel rosigniuol che sì soave piagne
forse suoi figli o sua cara consorte,
di dolcezza empie il cielo et le campagne
con tante note sì pietose et scorte, 4

et tutta notte par che m'accompagne
et mi rammente la mia dura sorte;
ch' altri che me non ò di chi mi lagne,
chè 'n dee non credev' io regnasse Morte. 8

O che lieve è inganar chi s'assecura!
Que' duo bei lumi assai più che 'l sol chiari
chi pensò mai veder far terra oscura? 11

Or cognosco io che mia fera ventura
vuol che vivendo et lagrimando impari
come nulla qua giù diletta et dura. 14

310

Zephyr comes back and brings with him fair weather
and his sweet family of grass and flowers,
and crying Philomel and chirping Procne,
and Springtime all in whiteness and vermilion;

the meadows smile, the skies turn clear again,
and Jove takes joy in gazing at his daughter;
the waters, earth, and air are full of love
and every living thing is bent on loving.

But there comes back to me only the gravest
of sighs that from the bottom of my heart
are drawn by one who took its keys to Heaven;

the song of birds, the flowering of meadows,
the noble, graciousness of lovely ladies
for me are deserts now, wild savage beasts.

311

That nightingale so tenderly lamenting
perhaps his children or his cherished mate,
in sweetness fills the sky and countryside
with many notes of grief skillfully played,

and all night long he stays with me it seems,
reminding me of my harsh destiny;
I have no one to blame except myself
for thinking Death could not rule such a goddess.

How easy to deceive one who is sure!
Those two lights, lovely, brighter than the sun,
whoever thought would turn the earth so dark?

And now I know what this fierce fate of mine
would have me learn as I live on in tears:
that nothing here can please and also last.

312

Né per sereno ciel ir vaghe stelle,
né per tranquillo mar legni spalmati,
né per campagne cavalieri armati,
né per bei boschi allegre fere et snelle, 4

né d'aspettato ben fresche novelle,
né dir d'amore in stili alti et ornati,
né tra chiare fontane et verdi prati
dolce cantare oneste donne et belle, 8

né altro sarà mai ch' al cor m'aggiunga:
sì seco il seppe quella sepellire
che sola agli occhi miei fu lume et speglio. 11

Noia m'è 'l viver sì gravosa et lunga
ch' i' chiamo il fine per lo gran desire
di riveder cui non veder fu 'l meglio. 14

313

Passato è 'l tempo omai, lasso, che tanto
con refrigerio in mezzo 'l foco vissi;
passato è quella di ch' io piansi et scrissi,
ma lasciato m'à ben la penna e 'l pianto. 4

Passato è 'l viso sì leggiadro et santo,
ma passando i dolci occhi al cor m'à fissi:
al cor già mio che seguendo partissi
lei ch' avolto l'avea nel suo bel manto. 8

Ella 'l se ne portò sotterra, e 'n Cielo
ove or triunfa ornata de l'alloro
che meritò la sua invitta onestate. 11

Così disciolto dal mortal mio velo,
ch' a forza mi tien qui, foss' io con loro
fuor de' sospir, fra l'anime beate! 14

312

No lovely stars that roam through limpid skies,
no well-oiled ships upon a tranquil sea,
no knights in armor through the countryside,
no swift and frisky beasts in charming woods,

no recent news of long-awaited joy,
no poems of love in lofty, ornate style,
nor there amid clear springs and fields of green
sweet song of ladies virtuous and lovely,

nor other thing can ever touch my heart:
she buried it so deep with her own self
who was alone for my eyes light and mirror.

So long and heavy is the pain of living,
that I call for the end, so much I want
to see the one I should have never seen.

313

Gone is the time now, O my grief, that I
lived so refreshed within those burning flames.
Gone is the one for whom I wept and wrote
but who still leaves me with my pen and tears.

Gone is the face so charming and so holy
that going pierced my heart with those sweet eyes,
that heart once mine which left to follow her,
the one who wrapped it in her lovely cloak.

She took it underground and up to Heaven
where now she triumphs decked in laurel leaf,
which her unconquered chastity deserved.

If only I, freed of my mortal veil
that holds me here by force, were with them there,
beyond all sighs, amid the blessèd souls!

314

Mente mia, che presaga de' tuoi danni,
al tempo lieto già pensosa et trista,
sì 'ntentamente ne l'amata vista
requie cercavi de' futuri affanni: 4

agli atti, a le parole, al viso, ai panni,
a la nova pietà con dolor mista
potei ben dir, se del tutto eri avista:
"Questo è l'ultimo dì de' miei dolci anni." 8

Qual dolcezza fu quella, misera alma,
come ardevamo in quel punto ch' i' vidi
gli occhi i quai non devea riveder mai, 11

quando a lor, come a' duo amici più fidi,
partendo in guardia la più nobil salma,
i miei cari penseri e 'l cor, lasciai! 14

315

Tutta la mia fiorita et verde etade
passava, e 'ntepidir sentia già 'l foco
ch' arse il mio core, et era giunto al loco
ove scende la vita ch' al fin cade; 4

già incominciava a prender securtade
la mia cara nemica a poco a poco
de' suoi sospetti, et rivolgeva in gioco
mie pene acerbe sua dolce onestade; 8

presso era 'l tempo dove Amor si scontra
con Castitate et agli amanti è dato
sedersi inseme et dir che lor incontra. 11

Morte ebbe invidia al mio felice stato,
anzi a la speme, et feglisi a l'incontra
a mezza via come nemico armato. 14

314

O my mind that, foreseeing grievous loss,
already worried, sad, in happy times
in the belovèd sight, sought so intently
some consolation from your coming troubles:

from how she moved and spoke and looked and dressed,
from her strange pity that was mixed with pain,
you could have said, were you fully aware:
"This is the last day of my years of sweetness."

What sweetness in that moment, my poor soul!
How much we burned the time that I beheld
those eyes that I would never see again,

that time when leaving I left in their keeping
(as if they were two of my truest friends)
my noblest part—my loving thoughts, my heart.

315

All of my flowering and my green age
was passing, and already I felt cooling
the fire in my heart, and I had reached
the point where life declines to meet its end;

already my dear enemy was slowly
beginning to gain confidence against
her fears and playfully to turn to joy
my bitter pains with her sweet honesty;

the time was near when Love is reconciled
with Chastity and lovers are allowed
to sit and talk, confiding in each other.

Then Death envied that blissful state of mine—
rather the hope—and rushed attacking it
halfway, just like an enemy all armed.

316

Tempo era omai da trovar pace o tregua
di tanta guerra, et erane in via, forse,
se non che' lieti passi indietro torse
chi le disaguaglianze nostre adegua; 4

ché come nebbia al vento si dilegua
così sua vita subito trascorse
quella che già co' begli occhi mi scorse,
et or conven che col penser la segua. 8

Poco aveva a 'ndugiar che gli anni e 'l pelo
cangiavano i costumi, onde sospetto
non fora il ragionar del mio mal seco; 11

con che onesti sospiri l'avrei detto
le mie lunghe fatiche! ch' or dal Cielo
vede, son certo, et duolsene ancor meco. 14

317

Tranquillo porto avea mostrato Amore
a la mia lunga et torbida tempesta
fra gli anni de la età matura, onesta,
che i vizi spoglia et vertù veste e onore; 4

già traluceva a' begli occhi il mio core
et l'alta fede non più lor molesta.
Ahi, Morte ria, come a schiantar se' presta
il frutto de molt'anni in sì poche ore! 8

Pur vivendo veniasi ove deposto
in quelle caste orecchie avrei, parlando,
de' miei dolci pensier l'antica soma, 11

et ella avrebbe a me forse resposto
qualche santa parola sospirando,
cangiati i volti et l'una et l'altra coma. 14

316

Now it was time to find my peace or truce
from such a war, and it might have been near,
but those glad steps were turned back by the one
who evens out our inequalities;

for as the mist vanishes with the wind,
so suddenly did she run through her life,
the one whose lovely eyes would guide my way,
whom I can follow now only in thought.

She hadn't long to wait, for years and hair
were changing me, and she need have no fear
that I would talk to her about my troubles.

With what virtuous sighs I would have told her
of my long labors, which from Heaven now
she sees, I'm sure, and grieves for them with me.

317

Love showed to me a port of peacefulness
from my unending storming turbulence
during the years of chaste maturity
that strips off vice to don virtue and honor;

my heart and my deep faithfulness now shone
in her fair eyes worried for them no longer.
Ah, wicked Death, how quick you are to spoil
the fruit of many years in so few hours!

If she had lived the day would come when I,
talking, would have entrusted her chaste ears
with all the ancient weight of my sweet thoughts,

and she, perhaps, would have replied to me
in chosen words of sighing consolation,
our faces changed, our hair, both hers and mine.

318

Al cader d'una pianta che si svelse
come quella che ferro o vento sterpe,
spargendo a terra le sue spoglie eccelse,
mostrando al sol la sua squalida sterpe, 4

vidi un'altra, ch' Amor obietto scelse,
subietto in me Calliope et Euterpe,
che 'l cor m'avinse et proprio albergo felse,
qual per trunco o per muro edera serpe. 8

Quel vivo lauro, ove solean far nido
li alti penseri e i miei sospiri ardenti
che de' bei rami mai non mossen fronda, 11

al Ciel translato, in quel suo albergo fido
lasciò radici onde con gravi accenti
è ancor chi chiami, et non è chi responda. 14

319

I dì miei più leggier che nesun cervo
fuggir come ombra, et non vider più bene
ch' un batter d'occhio, et poche ore serene
ch' amare et dolci ne la mente servo. 4

Misero mondo instabile et protervo,
del tutto è cieco chi 'n te pon sua spene,
ché 'n te mi fu 'l cor tolto, et or sel tene
tal ch' è già terra et non giunge osso a nervo. 8

Ma la forma miglior che vive ancora
et vivrà sempre su ne l' alto cielo,
di sue bellezze ogni or più m'innamora; 11

et vo sol in pensar cangiando il pelo
quale ella è oggi e 'n qual parte dimora,
qual a vedere il suo leggiadro velo. 14

318

At a tree's crash just torn up from the ground
as if uprooted by the wind or iron,
scattering on the earth its noble spoil,
displaying to the sun its wretched root,

I saw another Love chose as my goal,
and Euterpe and Calliope as my subject,
that bound my heart and turned it into home
as ivy winds its way on trunk or wall.

That living laurel, where there often nested
my lofty thoughts, my sighs of burning passion
that never stirred a leaf on those fair boughs,

risen to Heaven, left in that faithful dwelling
its roots, from where with painful sounds somebody
keeps calling out, but no one's there to answer.

319

My days, swifter than any deer, have fled
like shadows, and for me no good has lasted
more than a wink, and few were those calm hours
whose bittersweetness I keep in my mind.

O wretched world, changing and arrogant,
a man who puts his hope in you is blind:
from you my heart was torn and now is held
by one whose flesh and bones are turned to dust.

But her best form, which still continues living
and will forever live high in the heavens,
makes me fall more in love with all her beauty;

and as my hair is changing I think only
what she is like today and where she dwells,
what it was like to see her lovely veil.

320

Sento l'aura mia antica, e i dolci colli
veggio apparire onde 'l bel lume nacque
che tenne gli occhi mei, mentr' al Ciel piacque,
bramosi et lieti, or li ten tristi et molli.

O caduche speranze, o penser folli!
vedove l'erbe et torbide son l'acque
et voto et freddo 'l nido in ch' ella giacque,
nel qual io vivo et morto giacer volli,

sperando alfin da le soavi piante
et da' belli occhi suoi, che 'l cor m'ànn' arso,
riposo alcun de le fatiche tante.

O' servito a signor crudele et scarso:
ch' arsi quanto 'l mio foco ebbi davante,
or vo piangendo il suo cenere sparso.

321

E' questo 'l nido in che la mia fenice
mise l'aurate et le purpuree penne,
che sotto le sue ali il mio cor tenne
et parole et sospiri anco n'elice?

O del dolce mio mal prima radice,
ov' è il bel viso onde quel lume venne
che vivo et lieto ardendo mi mantenne?
Sol eri in terra, or se' nel Ciel felice

et m'ài lasciato qui misero et solo,
tal che pien di duol sempre al loco torno
che per te consecrato onoro et colo,

veggendo a' colli oscura notte intorno
onde prendesti al Ciel l'ultimo volo
et dove li occhi tuoi solean far giorno.

320

I feel the aura of old times, sweet hills
I see appear where the fair light was born
that kept my eyes, while it was Heaven's pleasure,
longing and glad, but now forlorn and wet.

Oh short-lived hopes! The madness in our thoughts!
The grass is widowed and the waters troubled,
empty and cold the nest in which she lay,
in which I live and would have liked to die,

hoping to have at last from her kind feet,
and from her lovely eyes that burned my heart
a little rest from so much laboring.

I served a lord who is both cruel and stingy:
I burned as long as I could see my fire,
now I am weeping for its scattered ashes.

321

Is this the nest where that phoenix of mine
was born to wear her gold and purple feathers,
and where she kept my heart under her wing
and still elicits sighs and words from it?

O primal root of my sweet malady,
where is the lovely face that poured with light
that kept me living, happy, while I burned?
A sun on earth and happy now in Heaven?

You left me here all wretched and alone,
so always I return to that place grieving
which I adore and honor for your sake;

I see the black of night around those hills
from where you made your final flight to Heaven
and where your eyes would bring the daylight in.

322

Mai non vedranno le mie luci asciutte
con le parti de l'animo tranquille
quelle note ov' Amor par che sfaville
et Pietà di sua man l'abbia construtte.

Spirto già invitto a le terrene lutte,
ch' or su dal Ciel tanta dolcezza stille
ch'a lo stil onde Morte dipartille
le disviate rime ài ricondutte:

di mie tenere frondi altro lavoro
credea mostrarte; et qual fero pianeta
ne'nvidiò inseme, o mio nobil tesoro?

chi 'nnanzi tempo mi t'asconde et vieta
che col cor veggio et co la lingua onoro?
E 'n te, dolce sospir, l'alma s'acqueta.

323

Standomi un giorno solo a la fenestra
onde cose vedea tante et sì nove
ch' era sol di mirar quasi già stanco,
una fera m'apparve da man destra
con fronte umana da far arder Giove,
cacciata da duo veltri, un nero, un bianco,
che l'un et l'altro fianco
de la fera gentil mordean sì forte
che 'n poco tempo la menaro al passo
ove chiusa in un sasso
vinse molta bellezza acerba morte,
et mi fe' sospirar sua dura sorte.

Indi per alto mar vidi una nave
con le sarte di seta et d'or la vela,
tutta d'avorio e d'ebeno contesta;
e 'l mar tranquillo et l'aura era soave

322

Never with eyes that are not wet or mind
that's tranquil shall I hope to look upon
those verses in which Love appears to sparkle
and which the hand of Kindness has composed. 4

Spirit unvanquished once by earthly strife,
who now distills such sweetness from the heavens
that you gave back my wandering poetry
the style it had before Death cut it off, 8

some other product of my tender leaves
I hoped to show you. What cruel planet envied
our union so, O noble treasure of mine? 11

Who hides and takes you from me much too early,
you whom I see by heart, honor by tongue?
In you, sweet sigh, my soul finds its repose. 14

323

One day while at my window all alone,
where I saw many and such strange things happen
that merely looking at them made me weary,
I saw a beast appear on my right side
with human face to make Jove flare with love
pursued by two swift hounds, one black one white, 6
who dug their teeth so deep
into both sides of such a noble beast
that in no time they forced her to the pass
where, trapped within the stone,
untimely death then vanquished such great beauty,
and I sighed from the sight of her harsh fate. 12

Then out on the deep sea I saw a boat
with silken ropes and sails made out of gold
all wrought with ivory and ebony;
the sea was calm, the breeze was gently blowing,

e 'l ciel qual è se nulla nube il vela,
ella carca di ricca merce onesta.
Poi repente tempesta
oriental turbò sì l'aere et l'onde
che la nave percosse ad uno scoglio.
O che grave cordoglio,
breve ora oppresse et poco spazio asconde
l'alte ricchezze a null'altre seconde!

In un boschetto novo i rami santi
fiorian d'un lauro giovenetto et schietto
ch' un delli arbor parea di paradiso;
et di sua ombra uscian sì dolci canti
di vari augelli et tant' altro diletto
che dal mondo m'avean tutto diviso.
Et mirandol io fiso,
cangiossi 'l cielo intorno, et tinto in vista
folgorando 'l percosse et da radice
quella pianta felice
subito svelse, onde mia vita è trista,
che simile ombra mai non si racquista.

Chiara fontana in quel medesmo bosco
sorgea d'un sasso et acque fresche et dolci
spargea soavemente mormorando;
al bel seggio riposto ombroso et fosco
né pastori appressavan né bifolci,
ma ninfe et muse a quel tenor cantando.
Ivi m'assisi, et quando
più dolcezza prendea di tal concento
et di tal vista, aprir vidi uno speco
et portarsene seco
la fonte e 'l loco, ond' ancor doglia sento
et sol de la memoria mi sgomento.

Una strania fenice, ambedue l'ale
di porpora vestita e 'l capo d'oro,
vedendo per la selva altera et sola,
veder forma celeste ed immortale
prima pensai, fin ch' a lo svelto alloro
giunse ed al fonte che la terra invola.
Ogni cosa al fin vola:

and there was not a cloud to veil the sky;
with rich and precious cargo she was laden.
And then a sudden storm
out of the East so shook the air and waters,
the boat was shattered up against the rocks.
Oh what oppressing grief:
in short time crushed, and little space now hides,
high riches that are second to no others!

Within a youthful grove were flowering
the boughs of a young, slender laurel tree
that seemed to have been grown in Paradise;
and from her shade there came so sweet a sound
of different birds and so much other joy
that it had cut me off from the real world.
And as I stared at her
the sky around her changed, and turning black
it struck with lightning, and then by the roots
that happy plant was torn
up suddenly, and now my life is sorrow,
for shade like this can never be regained.

Inside that very grove a sparkling fountain
sprang from a rock, and its fresh, loving waters
it poured forth with a gentle murmuring.
To that secluded place so fair and shady
no shepherds and no boors would come, but only
muses and nymphs singing to that clear flow.
I sat down there, and while
I took more sweetness from such harmony
and from that sight, I saw a chasm open
and sweep it all away,
fountain and place, and I am still left grieving,
and just the thought of it fills me with fear.

A marvelous phoenix with both of its wings
adorned in purple and its head in gold,
I saw there in the woods, proud and alone.
At first I thought it was a holy thing,
immortal, till it reached the torn-out laurel
and came upon the spring stolen away.
All things rush to their end;

ché mirando le frondi a terra sparse
e 'l troncon rotto et quel vivo umor secco,
volse in se stessa il becco,
quasi sdegnando, e 'n un punto disparse,
onde 'l cor di pietate et d'amor m'arse. 60

Alfin vid' io per entro i fiori et l'erba
pensosa ir sì leggiadra et bella Donna
che mai nol penso ch' i' non arda et treme,
umile in sé, ma 'ncontra Amor superba;
ed avea in dosso sì candida gonna,
sì testa, ch'or et neve parea inseme,
ma le parti supreme
eran avolte d'una nebbia oscura.
Punta poi nel tallon d'un picciol angue
come fior colto langue
lieta si dipartio, non che secura:
ahi nulla altro che pianto al mondo dura! 72

Canzon, tu puoi ben dire:
"Queste sei visioni al signor mio
àn fatto un dolce di morir desio." 75

324

Amor, quando fioria
mia spene e 'l guidardon di tanta fede,
tolta m'è quella ond' attendea mercede. 3

Ahi dispietata Morte, ahi crudel vita!
l'una m'à posto in doglia
et mie speranze acerbamente à spente;
l'altra mi ten qua giù contra mia voglia,
et lei che se n'è gita
seguir non posso, ch' ella no 'l consente. 9
Ma pur ogni or presente
nel mezzo del meo cor Madonna siede,
et qual è la mia vita, ella se 'l vede. 12

for, seeing all the leaves strewn on the ground,
the trunk broken, those living waters dry,
against herself she turned
her beak, as if in scorn, and quickly vanished—
pity and love then set my heart aflame.

At last I saw through grass and flowers walking
in thought a lady fair, so full of joy—
to think of it sets me aflame and shaking—
humble within herself, haughty to Love;
and she had on a gown so very white,
so woven that it seemed of snow and gold,
but all the upper part
of her was shrouded in a mist of dark.
Then stung upon her heel by a small snake,
as a cut flower withers,
she left in joy and more than confident:
ah, nothing but our tears last in this world!

My song, you well may say:
"These six visions just given to my lord
have given him a sweet wish to know death."

324

Love, when my hope was blossoming,
the guerdon of such faithfulness as mine,
taken from me was she who promised mercy.

Ah Death that shows no pity, ah cruel Life!
One fixes me in sorrow
and kills my hopes before they have matured;
the other holds me here against my will,
and she who is now gone
I cannot follow, Death will not allow.
But still, always in presence
in my heart's very center sits Madonna,
and she sees for herself what my life's like.

325

Tacer non posso, et temo non adopre
contrario effetto la mia lingua al core
che vorria far onore
a la sua donna, che dal Ciel n'ascolta.
Come poss' io, se non m'insegni, Amore,
con parole mortali aguagliar l'opre
divine et quel che copre
alta umiltate in se stessa raccolta?
Ne la bella pregione onde or è sciolta
poco era stato ancor l'alma gentile
al tempo che di lei prima m'accorsi;
onde subito corsi
(ch' era de l'anno et di mi' etate aprile)
a coglier fiori in quei prati dintorno,
sperando a li occhi suoi piacer sì addorno.

Muri eran d'alabastro e 'l tetto d'oro,
d'avorio uscio, et fenestre di zaffiro
onde 'l primo sospiro
mi giunse al cor et giugnerà l'estremo;
inde i messi d'Amor armati usciro
di saette et di foco, ond' io di loro
coronati d'alloro,
pur come or fusse, ripensando tremo.
D'un bel diamante quadro et mai non scemo
vi si vedea nel mezzo un seggio altero
ove sola sedea la bella donna;
dinanzi una colonna
cristallina, et iv' entro ogni pensero
scritto et for tralucea sì chiaramente
che mi fea lieto et sospirar sovente.

A le pungenti ardenti et lucide arme,
a la vittoriosa insegna verde
contra cui in campo perde
Giove et Apollo et Polifemo et Marte,
ov' è 'l pianto ogni or fresco et si rinverde,
giunto mi vidi, et non possendo aitarme
preso lassai menarme
ond' or non so d'uscir la via né l'arte.

325

Silent I cannot be, but still I fear
my tongue may not achieve my heart's intent
whose wish it is to honor
its lady who is hearing us from Heaven.
How can I, if you do not teach me, Love,
with mortal words do justice to the work
divine, concealed in high
humility collected in itself?
Not long had she been in the lovely prison
from which she now is free, that gracious soul,
when I first realized that she existed;
and so quickly I ran—
the April of my years and of that year—
to gather flowers in the fields around
and hoping, so adorned, to please her eyes.

The walls were alabaster, the roof gold,
the entrance ivory, sapphire the windows
from where the first of sighs
reached to my heart as will my very last,
from where Love's messengers burst forth all armed
with flame and arrows, and whenever I
think of them crowned in laurel
again I tremble as if then were now.
Within there could be seen a lofty throne
of diamond squarely cut, without a fault,
on which the lovely lady sat alone;
in front of her a column
crystalline where all of the thoughts inscribed
inside of it shone through so brilliantly
that often I was happy in my sighing.

To the piercing, all aflame, and shining arms,
and to that green ensign of victory
against which in a battle
Jove and Apollo, Polyphemus, Mars
would lose, where tears are always fresh and green
I saw that I had come, and helplessly
I let myself be taken
and have no way or means of getting out.

Ma sì com' uom talor che piange et parte
vede cosa che li occhi e 'l cor alletta,
così colei per ch' io son in pregione
standosi ad un balcone,
che fu sola a' suoi dì cosa perfetta,
cominciai a mirar con tal desio
che me stesso e 'l mio mal posi in oblio.

I' era in terra e 'l cor in paradiso
dolcemente obliando ogni altra cura,
et mia viva figura
far sentia un marmo e 'mpier di meraviglia;
quando una donna assai pronta et secura,
di tempo antica et giovene del viso,
vedendomi sì fiso
a l'atto de la fronte et de le ciglia:
"Meco," mi disse, "meco ti consiglia,
ch' i' son d'altro poder che tu non credi
et so far lieti et tristi in un momento,
più leggiera che 'l vento;
et reggo et volvo quanto al mondo vedi.
Tien pur gli occhi come aquila in quel sole,
parte da' orecchi a queste mie parole.

"Il dì che costei nacque, eran le stelle
che producon fra voi felici effetti
in luoghi alti et eletti
l'una ver l'altra con amor converse.
Venere e 'l padre con benigni aspetti
tenean le parti signorili et belle,
et le luci impie et felle
quasi in tutto del ciel eran disperse.
"Il sol mai sì bel giorno non aperse,
l'aere et la terra s'allegrava, et l'acque
per lo mar avean pace et per li fiumi.
Fra tanti amici lumi
una nube lontana mi dispiacque,
la qual temo che 'n pianto si resolve
se Pietate altramente il ciel non volve.

"Com' ella venne in questo viver basso,
ch' a dir il ver non fu degno d'averla,

But as a man who weeps sometimes departing
will see something that gladdens eyes and heart,
just so, when she, for whom I am in prison,
standing on a balcony,
she who alone was perfect in her days,
I began to look at her with such desire
that I forgot myself and my misfortune.

I was on earth, my heart in paradise,
forgetting sweetly every other care,
and I felt my live body
turning to marble, filling up with wonder;
when, very swift and sure, a lady,
old in her years but youthful in her look,
who saw me so intent
from the expression on my face and brow
announced to me: "With me, consult with me,
for I have greater power than you think
and can gladden and sadden in an instant,
I'm lighter than the wind
and rule and change all things you see on earth.
Keep your eyes fixed like an eagle on that sun
and meanwhile pay attention to my words.

"The day that she was born all of those stars
producing good effects among you there,
in high, selected places,
turned lovingly around to one another.
Both Venus and her father with good influence
were holding to those noble, lovely parts
while those cruel, impious lights
were almost all dispersed throughout the heavens.
A lovelier day the sun had never opened,
the air and earth rejoicing, and the waters
of all the seas and rivers were at peace.
Amid such friendly lights
a cloud off in the distance troubled me,
one which I fear will be resolved in tears,
if Pity does not change the heavens' course.

"When she came down into our lovely life,
which truly was not worthy of her presence,

cosa nova a vederla,
già santissima et dolce ancor acerba,
parea chiusa in or fin candida perla.
Et or carpone, or con tremante passo,
legno, acqua, terra o sasso
verde facea, chiara, soave, et l'erba
"con le palme o coi pie' fresca et superba,
et fiorir coi belli occhi le campagne,
et acquetar i venti et le tempeste
con voci, ancor non preste,
di lingua che dal latte si scompagne:
chiaro mostrando al mondo sordo et cieco
quanto lume del Ciel fusse già seco.

"Poi che crescendo in tempo et in virtute
giunse a la terza sua fiorita etate,
leggiadria né beltate
tanta non vide 'l sol, credo, giamai,
li occhi pien di letizia et d'onestate,
e 'l parlar di dolcezza et di salute.
Tutte lingue son mute
a dir di lei quel che tu sol ne sai:
"sì chiaro è 'l volto di celesti rai
che vostra vista in lui non po fermarse,
et da quel suo bel carcere terreno
di tal foco ài 'l cor pieno
ch' altro più dolcemente mai non arse;
ma parmi che sua subita partita
tosto ti fia cagion d'amara vita."

Detto questo, a la sua volubil rota
si volse in ch' ella fila il nostro stame,
trista et certa indivina de' miei danni;
ché dopo non molt'anni
quella per ch' io ò di morir tal fame,
canzon mia, spense Morte acerba et rea,
che più bel corpo occider non potea.

a wondrous thing to see,
already sweet and holy though unripe,
she was pure pearl enclosed in finest gold.
First crawling then with her first trembling steps
the trees and waters and the earth and stone
she made turn green or clear or soft, and grass
turn fresh and proud by touch of hand or foot,
and with her lovely eyes burst fields in bloom,
and she could quiet down the winds and storms
with words not fully formed
made by a tongue that had been barely weaned:
clearly she showed a world so deaf and blind
how much of Heaven's light was part of her.

"And then when she grew up in years and virtue,
reaching her third, her age of blossoming,
so much beauty and charm
the sun, I think, has never seen before,
her eyes so full of joy and shining truth
and all her words of sweetness and salvation.
And every tongue is dumb to tell of her
what you alone have learned.
So bright her face shines with celestial light
that your eyes cannot look for long at it,
and for her earthly prison of such beauty
your heart rages with flame
the way no other heart has burned more sweetly;
but I'm afraid that her sudden departure
will soon make life for you a bitter thing."

She said this, then to her revolving wheel
she turned, the one with which she spins our thread,
that sad and certain prophet of my losses:
after not many years
that one for whom I starve for death to come,
my song, perverse and bitter Death extinguished—
a body lovelier he could not kill.

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Or ài fatto l'estremo di tua possa,
o crudel Morte, or ài 'l regno d'Amore
impoverito, or di bellezza il fiore
e 'l lume ài spento et chiuso in poca fossa; 4

or ài spogliata nostra vita et scossa
d'ogni ornamento et del sovran suo onore;
ma la fama et 'l valor, che mai non more,
non è in tua forza: abbiti ignude l'ossa, 8

ché l'altro à 'l Cielo, et di sua chiaritate
quasi d'un più bel sol s'allegra et gloria;
et fi' al mondo de' buon sempre in memoria. 11

Vinca 'l cor vostro in sua tanta vittoria,
angel novo, lassù di me pietate,
come vinse qui il mio vostra beltate. 14

327

L'aura et l'odore e 'l refrigerio et l'ombra
del dolce lauro et sua vista fiorita,
lume et riposo di mia stanca vita,
tolto à colei che tutto 'l mondo sgombra. 4

Come a noi il sol, se sua soror l'adombra,
così l'alta mia luc' è a me sparita;
i' cheggio a Morte incontra Morte aita,
di sì scuri penseri Amor m'ingombra. 8

Dormit' ài, bella Donna, un breve sonno,
or se' svegliata fra li spirti eletti
ove nel suo Fattor l'alma s'interna; 11

et se mie rime alcuna cosa ponno,
consecrata fra i nobili intelletti
fia del tuo nome qui memoria eterna. 14

326

Now you have worked your power to the limit,
cruel Death, now Love's domain you have made poor,
now beauty's light and flower you have killed
and have enclosed it in a meager grave.

And now you have despoiled our life and taken
all ornament from it and its high honor,
but fame and worth, which never dies, are not
within your power—yours are the naked bones,

for Heaven has the rest, and in its brightness
glories with joy as in a brighter sun,
and all good souls will not forget her here.

In such great victory let your heart take,
new angel there above, pity on me
as all your beauty took me down on earth.

327

The aura, fragrance, coolness, and the shade,
the sight of the sweet laurel in full bloom,
the light and place to rest my weary life,
he took away who empties the whole world.

As sun when covered by its sister moon
vanishes, so my bright light disappeared.
I call on Death to help me combat Death—
with such dark thoughts Love fills my body's weight.

A short sleep you have slept, my lovely lady,
and now amid the chosen souls awakened,
there where a soul becomes one with its Maker;

and if my poetry has any power,
your name among all noble minds will be
immortalized to endless memory here.

328

L'ultimo, lasso, de' miei giorni allegri
(che pochi ò visto in questo viver breve)
giunto era, et fatto 'l cor tepida neve,
forse presago de' dì tristi et negri.

Qual à già i nervi e i polsi e i penser egri
cui domestica febbre assalir deve,
tal mi sentia, non sappiend' io che leve
venisse 'l fin de' miei ben non integri.

Li occhi belli, or in Ciel chiari et felici
del lume onde salute et vita piove,
lasciando i miei qui miseri et mendici,

dicean lor con faville oneste et nove:
"Rimanetevi in pace, o cari amici;
qui mai più, no, ma rivedremne altrove."

329

O giorno, o ora, o ultimo momento,
o stelle congiurate a 'mpoverirme!
o fido sguardo, or che volci tu dirme,
partend' io per non esser mai contento?

Or conosco i miei danni, or mi risento,
ch' i' credeva (ahi, credenze vane e 'nfirme!)
perder parte, non tutto, al dipartirme:
quante speranze se ne porta il vento!

Ché già 'l contrario era ordinato in Cielo—
spegner l'almo mio lume ond' io vivea—
et scritto era in sua dolce amara vista;

ma 'nnanzi agli occhi m'era post' un velo
che mi fea non veder quel ch' i' vedea,
per far mia vita subito più trista.

328

The last, alas, of all my happy days,
of which I have seen few in this short life,
had come and turned my heart to melting snow,
perhaps foretelling dark, sad days to come.

As one who feels a fever coming on
can feel his nerves and pulse and thoughts grow weak,
so I felt, though I did not know how swift
the end of my imperfect good was coming.

The lovely eyes, now bright and glad in Heaven,
in light that pours with life and with salvation,
leaving my eyes down here wretched and poor,

announced to them with splendor chaste and new:
"Now rest assured, dear friends, not here, no never,
but somewhere else we will see one another."

329

O day, O hour, O that final moment,
O stars conspired to impoverish me!
O faithful glance, what did you want to tell me
when I left never to know joy again?

I know my losses now, now I'm aware,
for I thought—ah, groundless and unstable thoughts—
to lose a part, not all, when I departed.
How many hopes are swept off by the wind!

Already Heaven had ordained the opposite:
extinguish the rich light by which I lived—
it was inscribed on her sweet, bitter look,

but there before my eyes was placed a veil
that made me not see what I truly saw
to make my life, all of a sudden, sadder.

330

Quel vago, dolce, caro, onesto sguardo
dir parea: "To' di me quel che tu poi,
che mai più qui non mi vedrai da poi
ch' avrai quinci il pe' mosso a mover tardo." 4

Intelletto veloce più che pardo,
pigro in antivedere i dolor tuoi,
come non vedestu nelli occhi suoi
quel che ved' ora, ond' io mi struggo et ardo? 8

Taciti, sfavillando oltra lor modo,
dicean: "O lumi amici che gran tempo
con tal dolcezza feste di noi specchi, 11

"il Ciel n'aspetta; a voi parrà per tempo,
ma chi ne strinse qui dissolve il nodo,
e 'l vostro, per farv' ira, vuol che 'nvecchi." 14

331

Solea da la fontana di mia vita
allontanarme et cercar terre et mari,
non mio voler ma mia stella seguendo,
et sempre andai (tal Amor diemmi aita)
in quelli esilii, quanto e' vide amari,
di memoria et di speme il cor pascendo. 6
Or, lasso, alzo la mano et l'arme rendo
a l'empia et violenta mia fortuna
che privo m'à di sì dolce speranza;
sol memoria m'avanza,
et pasco 'l gran desir sol di quest'una,
onde l'alma vien men frale et digiuna. 12

Come a corrier tra via, se 'l cibo manca,
conven per forza rallentare il corso,
scemando la vertù che 'l fea gir presto;
così mancando a la mia vita stanca

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That yearning, sweet dear honest glance of hers
would seem to say: "Take all you can from me,
for never shall you see me here again
once you have moved a reluctant foot away."

O intellect more swift than any panther,
but in foreseeing all your grief too slow,
how could you not have seen within her eyes
what you see now which makes me burn and suffer?

In silence they were sparkling more than ever,
saying: "O friendly lights who for so long
and with such sweetness made of us your mirrors,

"Heaven awaits us—to you it seems too early,
but He who bound us here dissolves the knot,
and yours to make you angry he lets age."

331

I used to leave behind my life's own fountain
and travel far in search through land and sea
following not my will but my star's calling,
and I went always (Love gave me such help)
into those exiles (he's known none more bitter)
feeding my heart on memory and hope.
But now I raise my hands, surrender arms
to the cruel, violent fortune that is mine,
that has deprived me of so much sweet hope.
Memory alone is left me,
my great desire feeds on this alone,
and so my frail and starving soul is failing.

A runner on his course, if he lacks food,
is forced to slow his pace when all the strength
that made him run so fast diminishes,
so as my weary life feels itself lacking

quel caro nutrimento, in che di morso
die' chi 'l mondo fa nudo e 'l mio cor mesto,
il dolce acerbo e 'l bel piacer molesto
mi si fa d'ora in ora; onde 'l camino
sì breve non fornir spero et pavento.
Nebbia o polvere al vento,
fuggo per più non esser pellegrino:
et così vada s' è pur mio destino.

Mai questa mortal vita a me non piacque
(sassel Amor con cui spesso ne parlo)
se non per lei che fu 'l suo lume e 'l mio;
poi che 'n terra morendo al Ciel rinacque
quello spirto ond' io vissi, a seguitarlo
licito fusse è 'l mi' sommo desio.
Ma da dolermi ò ben sempre, perch' io
fui mal accorto a proveder mio stato
ch' Amor mostrommi sotto quel bel ciglio
per darmi altro consiglio:
ché tal morì già tristo et sconsolato
cui poco inanzi era 'l morir beato.

Nelli occhi ov' abitar solea 'l mio core
(fin che mia dura sorte invidia n'ebbe,
che di sì ricco albergo il pose in bando),
di sua man propria avea descritto Amore
con lettre di pietà quel ch' averrebbe
tosto del mio sì lungo ir desiando.
Bello et dolce morire era allor quando,
morend' io, non moria mia vita inseme,
anzi vivea di me l'ottima parte;
or mie speranze sparte
à Morte, et poca terra il mio ben preme,
et vivo, et mai nol penso ch' i' non treme.

Se stato fusse il mio poco intelletto
meco al bisogno, et non altra vaghezza
l'avesse disviando altrove vòlto,
ne la fronte a Madonna avrei ben letto:
"Al fin se' giunto d'ogni tua dolcezza
et al principio del tuo amaro molto."

that cherished food devoured by the one
who leaves the world naked and my heart sad,
the sweet bitter, and lovely pleasure pain
becomes for me from day to day; and so life's journey,
though brief, I fear and hope not to complete.
A mist or dust caught in the wind, I flee
to be no more a pilgrim in this life,
and let it happen if it be my fate.

I never liked this mortal life of ours
(Love knows with whom I often spoke of it)
except for her who was its light and mine;
that spirit I once lived in having died
on earth to be reborn in Heaven, my wish
above all is to follow her—if only!
But I shall always have to grieve, for I
was poorly skilled in seeing my condition,
which Love showed me beneath that lovely brow
to give me other counsel:
many have died in sorrow, unconsoled,
who might have died in joy by dying sooner.

Within the eyes in which my heart once lived
(until cruel fate began to envy it
and banished it from that rich dwelling place),
in his own hand Love had inscribed in letters
made out of pity telling what would come
quite soon from my long journey of desire.
How nice and sweet if I had died then; when
dying my life would not have died with me—
rather, the best of me would have lived on;
and now my hopes are scattered
by Death; a bit of earth hides all my wealth,
and I live on—to think of it I tremble.

If all the little intellect I have,
when I had needed, and another yearning
had not turned it elsewhere and made it stray,
clear on my lady's brow I might have read:
"Now you have reached where all your sweetness ends
and the beginning of great bitterness."

Questo intendendo, dolcemente sciolto
in sua presenzia del mortal mio velo
et di questa noiosa et grave carne,
potea inanzi lei andarne
a veder preparar sua sedia in Cielo:
or l'andrò dietro omai con altro pelo. 60

Canzon, s' uom trovi in suo amor viver queto,
dí: "Muor mentre se' lieto,
ché morte al tempo è non duol ma refugio,
et chi ben po morir non cerchi indugio." 64

332

Mia benigna fortuna e 'l viver lieto,
i chiari giorni et le tranquille notti
e i soavi sospiri, e 'l dolce stile
che solea resonare in versi e 'n rime,
vòlti subitamente in doglia e 'n pianto
odiar vita mi fanno et bramar morte. 6

Crudele, acerba, inesorabil Morte,
cagion mi dài di mai non esser lieto
ma di menar tutta mia vita in pianto
e i giorni oscuri et le dogliose notti;
i mei gravi sospir non vanno in rime,
e 'l mio duro martir vince ogni stile. 12

Ove è condutto il mio amoroso stile?
a parlar d'ira, a ragionar di morte.
U' sono i versi, u' son giunte le rime
che gentil cor udia pensoso et lieto?
Ov' è 'l favoleggiar d'amor le notti?
Or non parl' io né penso altro che pianto. 18

Già mi fu col desir sì dolce il pianto
che condia di dolcezza ogni agro stile
et vegghiar mi facea tutte le notti;
or m'è 'l pianger amaro più che morte,

If I had understood this, sweetly freed
(and in her presence) of my mortal veil,
of this heavy, burdensome flesh of mine,
I could have gone before her
to watch Heaven prepare for her a throne—
but now I'll follow her, with my hair changed.

Song, should you find a man who loves in peace,
say: "Die while you are happy,
for timely death is not grief but a refuge:
let he who can die well delay no longer."

332

My kindly fortune and my life, so happy,
the clear-lit days and all the tranquil nights,
the gentle-flowing sighs and the sweet style
that would resound in all my verse and rhymes—
all of a sudden turned to grief and tears—
make me hate life and make me yearn for death.

Cruel, bitter, inexorable Death,
you give me reason never to be happy,
but rather to lead all my life in tears,
with days of darkness and sorrowful nights;
my heavy sighs cannot turn into rhymes,
and my harsh torment goes beyond all style.

To what end has it come, my loving style,
talking of anger, or discussing death?
Where have they gone, those verses and those rhymes
a gentle heart would hear thoughtful and happy?
Where is that talk of love through all those nights?
I talk now and I think nothing but tears.

Once my desire was so sweet with tears,
its sweetness seasoned every bitter style
and made me stay awake through all those nights;
now weeping is more bitter than is death

non sperando mai 'l guardo onesto et lieto,
alto sogetto a le mie basse rime.

Chiaro segno Amor pose a le mie rime
dentro a' belli occhi, et or l'à posto in pianto
con dolor rimembrando il tempo lieto,
ond' io vo col penser cangiando stile
et ripregando te, pallida Morte,
che mi sottragghi a sì penose notti.

Fuggito è 'l sonno a le mie crude notti,
e 'l sono usato a le mie roche rime
che non sanno trattar altro che morte;
così è 'l mio cantar converso in pianto.
Non à 'l regno d'Amor sì vario stile,
ch' è tanto or tristo quanto mai fu lieto.

Nesun visse giamai più di me lieto,
nesun vive più tristo et giorni et notti,
et doppiando 'l dolor, doppia lo stile
che trae del cor sì lacrimose rime.
Vissi di speme, or vivo pur di pianto,
né contra Morte spero altro che morte.

Morte m'à morto, et sola po far Morte
ch' i' torni a riveder quel viso lieto
che piacer mi facea i sospiri e 'l pianto,
l'aura dolce et la pioggia a le mie notti
quando i penseri eletti tessea in rime,
Amor alzando il mio debile stile.

Or avess' io un sì pietoso stile
che Laura mia potesse torre a Morte
come Euridice Orfeo sua senza rime,
ch' i' viverei ancor più che mai lieto!
S' esser non po, qualcuna d'este notti
chiuda omai queste due fonti di pianto.

Amor, i' ò molti et molt'anni pianto
mio grave danno in doloroso stile,
né da te spero mai men fere notti;
et però mi son mosso a pregar Morte
che mi tolla di qui per farme lieto
ove è colei che i' canto et piango in rime.

without hope of that glance, honest and happy,
the lofty subject of my lowly rhymes.

A clear goal Love once set for all my rhymes
in those fair eyes, now he set it in tears
recalling in my sorrow times so happy,
so I go changing with my thought my style
and begging and rebegging you, pale Death,
to rescue me from such tormenting nights.

All sleep has run away from my cruel nights
as has the usual sound from my hoarse rhymes
that cannot deal with anything but death,
and so my singing now has turned to tears.
Love's kingdom does not know such varied style,
one now as sad as ever it was happy.

There never lived a man who was more happy,
and no one lives more sadly days and nights
and doubling up his grief doubles his style
that pulls from out his heart such tearful rhymes.
I lived on hope, I live now just on tears
hoping against Death only for my death.

Death gave me death, and it is only Death
can make me see again the face so happy
that filled with pleasure all my sighs and tears,
the breath so sweet, the rain of all my nights
when noble thoughts were woven into rhymes
by Love as he raised up my fragile style.

Would that I had so sorrowful a style
that I could get my Laura back from Death
as Orpheus did Eurydice without rhymes,
then I would be, more than I've been, so happy!
If this can never be, then let some nights
come soon and close my two fountains of tears.

Love, many, many years I have shed tears
for my grave loss and in a grieving style
and there's no hope you'll make less cruel my nights,
and so now I have turned to begging Death
to take me from this place, and make me happy,
to her for whom I sing and weep in rhymes.

Poem 332

Se sì alto pon gir mie stanche rime
ch' agiungan lei ch' è fuor d'ira et di pianto
et fa 'l Ciel or di sue bellezze lieto,
ben riconoscerà 'l mutato stile
che già forse le piacque anzi che Morte
chiaro a lei giorno, a me fesse atre notti.

O voi che sospirate a miglior notti,
ch' ascoltate d'Amore o dite in rime,
pregate non mi sia più sorda Morte,
porto de le miserie et fin del pianto;
muti una volta quel suo antiquo stile
ch' ogni uom attrista et me po far sì lieto.

Far mi po lieto in una o 'n poche notti,
e 'n aspro stile e 'n angosciose rime
prego che 'l pianto mio finisca Morte.

333

Ite, rime dolenti, al duro sasso
che 'l mio caro tesoro in terra asconde,
ivi chiamate chi dal Ciel risponde
ben che 'l mortal sia in loco oscuro et basso.

Ditele ch' i' son già di viver lasso,
del navigar per queste orribili onde,
ma ricogliendo le sue sparte fronde
dietro le vo pur così passo passo,

sol di lei ragionando viva et morta
(anzi pur viva, et or fatta immortale),
a ciò che 'l mondo la conosca et ame.

Piacciale al mio passar esser accorta,
ch' è presso omai; siami a l'incontro, et quale
ella è nel Cielo, a sé mi tiri et chiame.

If they can reach so high, my weary rhymes
and join the one beyond sorrow and tears
who with her beauty now makes Heaven happy,
she'll surely recognize my change of style
which once pleased her, perhaps, until came Death
to make bright day for her, for me dark nights.

O all of you who sigh for better nights,
who listen about Love or write in rhymes,
pray Death to be no longer deaf to me,
the port of misery, the end of tears;
for once let her give up her ancient style
that brings all sorrow but can make me happy.

She can make me happy in a few nights,
and in harsh style and in my anguished rhymes
I pray my tears come to an end with Death.

333

Go now, my grieving verse, to the hard stone
that hides my precious treasure in the earth;
and there call her, who will respond from Heaven
although her mortal part be darkly buried,

and tell her I am weary now of living,
of sailing through the horrors of this sea,
but that, by gathering up her scattered leaves,
I follow her this way, step after step,

speaking of her alone, alive and dead
(rather, alive, and now immortalized),
so that the world may know and love her more.

Let her watch for the day I pass away
(it is not far from now), let her meet me,
call me, draw me to what she is in Heaven.

334

S' onesto amor po meritar mercede
et se pietà ancor po quant' ella suole,
mercede avrò, ché più chiara che 'l sole
a Madonna et al mondo è la mia fede. 4

Già di me paventosa, or sa, nol crede,
che quello stesso ch' or per me si vole
sempre si volse; et s' ella udia parole
o vedea 'l volto, or l'animo e 'l cor vede. 8

Ond' i' spero che 'nfin al Ciel si doglia
di miei tanti sospiri; et così mostra,
tornando a me sì piena di pietate; 11

et spero ch' al por giù di questa spoglia
venga per me con quella gente nostra,
vera amica di Cristo et d'onestate. 14

335

Vidi fra mille donne una già tale
ch' amorosa paura il cor m'assalse,
mirandola in imagini non false
a li spirti celesti in vista eguale. 4

Niente in lei terreno era o mortale
sì come a cui del Ciel, non d'altro, calse;
l'alma, ch' arse per lei sì spesso et alse,
vaga d'ir seco aperse ambedue l'ale, 8

ma tropp' era alta al mio peso terrestre,
et poco poi n'uscì in tutto di vista,
di che pensando ancor m'aghiaccio et torpo. 11

O belle et alte et lucide fenestre
onde colei che molta gente attrista
trovò la via d'entrare in sì bel corpo! 14

334

If love that's virtuous can merit mercy
and pity's strong as she has ever been,
I'll find reward, for brighter than the sun
my faith is to the world and to my lady.

She used to fear me, now she knows for certain
the very thing I want now I have always
wanted, and if she once heard words or saw
my face, now she can see my heart and soul.

And so I hope Heaven will grieve at last
for all my sighs, and so it seems it does
as she returns to me so full of pity;

I hope when these remains are left behind
she'll come for me with all that host of ours,
who are true friends of Christ and honesty.

335

Among a thousand ladies I saw one
so great that amorous fear besieged my heart,
observing her through no false images,
she looked just like a spirit of the heavens.

No signs of earth or mortal cares in her,
like one she was who cared only for Heaven;
my soul which burned and froze for her so often,
yearning to follow her, spread both its wings.

Too high she was for earthly weight like mine,
and soon she was out of my sight completely—
I freeze and stiffen at the thought of it.

O lovely, lofty windows of clear light
where she, who makes so many people grieve,
found entrance into such a splendid body!

336

Tornami a mente (anzi v'è dentro quella
ch' indi per Lete esser non po sbandita)
qual io la vidi in su l'età fiorita
tutta accesa de' raggi di sua stella; 4

sì nel mio primo occorso onesta et bella
veggiola in sè raccolta et sì romita,
ch' i' grido: "Ell' è ben dessa, ancor è in vita!"
e 'n don le cheggio sua dolce favella. 8

Talor risponde et talor non fa motto;
i' come uom ch' erra et poi più dritto estima
dico a la mente mia: "Tu se' 'ngannata. 11

"Sai che 'n mille trecento quarantotto,
il dì sesto d'aprile, in l'ora prima
del corpo uscio quell'anima beata." 14

337

Quel che d'odore et di color vincea
l'odorifero et lucido oriente,
frutti, fiori, erbe et frondi onde 'l ponente
d'ogni rara eccellenzia il pregio avea, 4

dolce mio lauro, ove abitar solea
ogni bellezza, ogni vertute ardente,
vedeva a la sua ombra onestamente
il mio signor sedersi et la mia dea. 8

Ancor io il nido di penseri eletti
posi in quell'alma pianta, e 'n foco e 'n gielo
tremando, ardendo, assai felice fui. 11

Pieno era il mondo de' suoi onor perfetti,
allor che Dio per adornarne il Cielo
la si ritolse, et cosa era da lui. 14

336

She comes to mind (no, she is always there—
not even Lethe can erase her image)
the way I saw her in her flowering,
all splendid in the rays of her own star.

I first encounter her so chaste and lovely,
and see her so withdrawn and on her own,
I cry, "It's truly she, she's still alive!"
I ask her for the gift of her sweet words.

Sometimes she speaks, and sometimes not a word;
like one mistaken who then thinks things out,
I tell my mind: "Yes, you have been deceived.

"You do know that in thirteen forty-eight,
at hour one of the sixth day of April
that soul now blest departed from its body."

337

That, which in fragrance and in hue surpassed
the splendid, odoriferous Orient,
fruits, flowers, grass, and leaves for which the West
is known for its unique supremacy,

sweet laurel, which is mine, the dwelling place
of every beauty, every ardent virtue,
saw in its shadow decorously honest
sitting together there my lord and goddess.

And more, I built my nest of chosen thoughts
within that fertile tree, and burning, freezing,
aflame and trembling, I was very happy.

Her perfect qualities then filled the world
when God in order to adorn His Heaven
took her, and she was worthy of His presence.

338

Lasciato ài, Morte, senza sole il mondo
oscuro et freddo, Amor cieco et inerme,
Leggiadria ignuda, le Bellezze inferme,
me sconsolato et a me grave pondo, 4

Cortesia in bando, et Onestate in fondo;
dogliom' io sol né sol ò da dolerme,
ché svelt' ài di vertute il chiaro germe:
spento il primo valor, qual fia il secondo? 8

Pianger l'aer et la terra e 'l mar devrebbe
l'uman legnaggio, che senz' ella è quasi
senza fior prato, o senza gemma anello. 11

Non la conobbe il mondo mentre l'ebbe;
conobbil' io ch' a pianger qui rimasi
e 'l Ciel che del mio pianto or si fa bello. 14

339

Conobbi (quanto il Ciel li occhi m'aperse,
quanto studio et Amor m'alzaron l'ali)
cose nove et leggiadre, ma mortali,
che 'n un soggetto ogni stella cosperse. 4

L'altre tante sì strane et sì diverse
forme, altere celesti et immortali,
perché non furo a l'intelletto eguali
la mia debile vista non sofferse. 8

Onde quant' io di lei parlai né scrissi,
ch' or per lodi anzi a Dio preghi mi rende,
fu breve stilla d'infiniti abissi; 11

ché stilo oltra l'ingegno non si stende,
et per aver uom li occhi nel sol fissi,
tanto si vede men quanto più splende. 14

338

You have left, Death, the world without its sun,
dark in the cold, and Love unarmed and blind,
and charm naked, and every beauty weak,
and me here, unconsoled, a heavy burden,

courtesy exiled, chastity sunk low;
I grieve alone though more have cause to grieve
for you've uprooted the pure seed of virtue—
once highest worth is dead, what will be second?

The air and earth and sea should all shed tears
for mankind's lineage: her absence is
a field without flowers, a gemless ring.

The world did not know her while she was here;
I knew her, I who am left here to weep
and Heaven now made lovely by my tears.

339

I knew—so much had Heaven opened my eyes,
such diligence and Love raised up my wings—
unusual and gracious things, but mortal,
which all the stars had showered on one subject.

Those many other so strange and wondrous
forms of celestial immortality
because they were no match for my mind's eye,
my weak sight was not able to endure.

And so, all that I spoke or wrote of her,
who for my praise now gives me prayers to God,
is a mere drop compared to depthless seas;

for pen cannot extend beyond one's wit,
and though one has his eyes fixed on the sun,
the less he sees the brighter shines its light.

340

Dolce mio caro et prezioso pegno
che Natura mi tolse e 'l Ciel mi guarda:
deh, come è tua pietà ver me sì tarda,
o usato di mia vita sostegno? 4

Già suo' tu far il mio sonno almen degno
de la tua vista, et or sostien ch' i' arda
senz' alcun refrigerio, et chi 'l retarda?
Pur lassù non alberga ira né sdegno, 8

onde qua giuso un ben pietoso core
talor si pasce delli altrui tormenti,
sì ch' elli è vinto nel suo regno Amore. 11

Tu che dentro mi vedi e 'l mio mal senti
et sola puoi finir tanto dolore,
con la tua ombra acqueta i miei lamenti. 14

341

Deh, qual pietà, qual angel fu sì presto
a portar sopra 'l cielo il mio cordoglio?
ch' ancor sento tornar pur come soglio
Madonna in quel suo atto dolce onesto 4

ad acquetare il cor misero et mesto,
piena sì d'umiltà, vota d'argoglio,
e 'n somma tal ch' a morte i' mi ritoglio,
et vivo, et 'l viver più non m'è molesto. 8

Beata s'è che po beare altrui
co la sua vista, o ver co le parole
intellette da noi soli ambedui: 11

"Fedel mio caro, assai di te mi dole;
ma pur per nostro ben dura ti fui,"
dice, et cos' altre d'arrestare il sole. 14

340

Sweet, precious, and so cherished pledge of mine
whom Nature took and Heaven keeps for me,
ah, why is pity late to reach me now,
O you, my life's habitual support?

At least my sleep you once considered worthy
to show yourself, and now you let me burn
without relief—and who delays its coming?
Up there, surely, there dwells no scorn or anger,

because of which a pitying heart down here
sometimes will feed upon another's torment,
so Love himself in his own realm is vanquished.

You, who can see inside me know my pain,
and are the only one can end my grief,
with your own shadow quiet my laments.

341

What pity, ah, what angel was so swift
to carry through the heavens my heart's grief?
Again I feel, as in the past, returning,
my lady in her own way chaste and sweet

to bring peace to my sad and wretched heart;
full of humility, empty of pride
she is, such that I now draw back from death
and live, and living is no longer hard.

Blessèd is she who can make others blest
by seeing her, or with those words of hers
that only for the two of us had meaning:

"My dear and faithful one, I grieve for you;
but for our own good I was cruel to you,"
she says, and more, enough to stay the sun.

342

Del cibo onde 'l signor mio sempre abonda,
lagrime et doglia, il cor lasso nudrisco;
et spesso tremo et spesso impallidisco,
pensando a la sua piaga aspra et profonda. 4

Ma chi né prima simil né seconda
ebbe al suo tempo, al letto in ch' io languisco
vien tal ch' a pena a rimirarl' ardisco,
et pietosa s'asside in su la sponda. 8

Con quella man che tanto desiai
m'asciuga li occhi, et col suo dir m'apporta
dolcezza ch' uom mortal non sentì mai: 11

"Che val," dice, "a saver chi si sconforta?
Non pianger più, non m'ài tu pianto assai?
ch' or fostu vivo com' io non son morta!" 14

343

Ripensando a quel ch' oggi il Cielo onora
soave sguardo, al chinar l'aurea testa,
al volto, a quella angelica modesta
voce che m'addolciva et or m'accora, 4

gran meraviglia ò com' io viva ancora;
né vivrei già, se chi tra bella e onesta
qual fu più lasciò in dubbio, non sì presta
fusse al mio scampo là verso l'aurora. 8

O che dolci accoglienze et caste et pie!
et come intentamente ascolta et nota
la lunga istoria de le pene mie! 11

Poi che 'l dì chiaro par che la percota,
tornasi al Ciel, ché sa tutte le vie,
umida li occhi et l'una et l'altra gota. 14

342

The food with which my lord always abounds,
sorrow and tears, I feed my weary heart;
I tremble often, often I turn pale
when I think of its deep and bitter wound.

But she, who had no equal or a second
when she was living, comes to my sickbed—
I hardly dare to gaze on such a one—
and full of pity she sits on the edge.

Then with that hand which I so much desired
she dries my eyes and brings me with her words
sweetness no mortal man has ever felt:

"What good," she says, "is knowledge with despair?
Stop weeping. Have you not wept enough for me?
Were you as much alive as I'm not dead!"

343

Recalling that which Heaven now esteems:
sweet look, the tilting of her golden head,
the face, and that angelic modesty
of voice which sweetened once and now makes sad,

I am amazed that I am still alive;
nor would I live if she who makes one doubt
whether she is more lovely or more chaste,
were not so quick to help me when dawn comes.

Oh what sweet welcomings, so chaste and kind!
And with what concentration she takes note
of the long history of my sufferings!

When light of day appears to strike her image,
to Heaven she returns—she knows the ways—
her eyes and both her cheeks bathed in her tears.

344

Fu forse un tempo dolce cosa amore
(non per ch’ i’ sappia il quando), or è sì amara
che nulla più; ben sa ’l ver chi l’impara
com’ ò fatt’ io, con mio grave dolore.

Quella che fu del secol nostro onore,
or è del Ciel che tutto orna et rischiara,
fe’ mia requie a’ suoi giorni et breve et rara;
or m’à d’ogni riposo tratto fore.

Ogni mio ben crudel Morte m’à tolto,
né gran prosperità il mio stato avverso
po consolar di quel bel spirto sciolto.

Piansi et cantai; non so più mutar verso,
ma dì et notte il duol ne l’alma accolto
per la lingua et per li occhi sfogo et verso.

345

Spinse amor et dolor ove ir non debbe
la mia lingua, aviata a lamentarsi,
a dir di lei per ch’ io cantai et arsi
quel che, se fusse ver, torto sarebbe;

ch’ assai ’l mio stato rio quetar devrebbe
quella beata, e ’l cor racconsolarsi
vedendo tanto lei domesticarsi
con colui che vivendo in cor sempre ebbe.

Et ben m’acqueto, et me stesso consolo,
né vorrei rivederla in questo inferno,
anzi voglio morire et viver solo;

ché più bella che mai con l’occhio interno
con li angeli la veggio alzata a volo
a pie’ del suo et mio Signore eterno.

344

Perhaps there was a time when love was sweet
(although I know not when), but now there's nothing
more bitter! He well knows the truth who learns
the way I have through my hard suffering.

She who once was the glory of our world
is now of Heaven which she makes bright and lovely;
she made my rest in her time brief and rare,
and now she has deprived me of all peace.

Cruel Death robbed me of all the good I had,
nor does great bliss of her free, lovely soul
afford my adverse state some consolation.

I wept and sang; I cannot change my ways:
but night and day the grief my soul collected
I pour forth with my tongue and through my eyes.

345

My tongue so used to grieving has been urged
by love and grief to move in the wrong way:
to say of her for whom I sang and burned
that which, if it were true, would not be right.

Her blessedness should be enough to quiet
my sad condition and console my heart:
the fact that she is so at home with Him
who while she lived was always in her heart.

And I am calmed and do console myself;
nor would I want to see her in this hell,
I would prefer to die and live alone.

More beautiful then ever my mind's eye
beholds her with the angels high in flight
at the feet of her and my eternal Lord.

346

Li angeli eletti et l'anime beate
cittadine del Cielo, il primo giorno
che Madonna passò, le fur intorno
piene di meraviglia et di pietate. 4

"Che luce è questa et qual nova beltate?"
dicean tra lor: "perch' abito sì adorno
dal mondo errante a quest'alto soggiorno
non salì mai in tutta questa etate." 8

Ella, contenta aver cangiato albergo,
si paragona pur coi più perfetti
et parte ad or ad or si volge a tergo, 11

mirando s' io la seguo, et par ch' aspetti;
ond' io voglie et pensier tutti al Ciel ergo
perch' i' l'odo pregar pur ch' i' m'affretti. 14

347

Donna che lieta col Principio nostro
ti stai, come tua vita alma rechiede,
assisa in alta et gloriosa sede
et d'altro ornata che di perle o d'ostro, 4

o de le donne altero et raro mostro:
or nel volto di lui che tutto vede
vedi 'l mio amore et quella pura fede
per ch' io tante versai lagrime e 'nchiostro, 8

et senti che ver te il mio core in terra
tal fu qual ora è in Cielo, et mai non volsi
altro da te che 'l sol de li occhi tuoi. 11

Dunque per amendar la lunga guerra
per cui dal mondo a te sola mi volsi,
prega ch' i' venga tosto a star con voi. 14

346

The chosen angels and the blessèd souls
of Heaven's citizens, on the first day
my lady passed away, surrounded her,
all full of wonder and of reverence.

"What light is this, and what unusual beauty,"
they said to one another, "for so lovely
a soul in all this time has never risen
out of the erring world to this high home."

She, happy to have changed her dwelling place,
is equal to the most perfected souls;
meanwhile, from time to time, she turns to see

if I am following her, and seems to wait,
so all my thoughts and wishes strain to Heaven—
I even hear her praying that I hurry.

347

Lady, now happy in our Maker's presence
as your reward for such a holy life,
seated upon a high and glorious throne,
adorned with other things than pearls and purple,

O lofty and rare wonder among ladies:
now in the face of Him who sees all things
you see my love and that pure faith of mine
for which I poured such tears and so much ink,

you know my heart felt for you then on earth
what it feels now in Heaven—I never wanted
more from you than the sunlight of your eyes.

So then, to make amends for the long war
which turned me from the world to you alone,
pray that I come, and soon, to be with you.

348

Da' più belli occhi, et dal più chiaro viso
che mai splendesse, et da' più bei capelli
che facean l'oro e 'l sol parer men belli,
dal più dolce parlare et dolce riso, 4

da le man, da le braccia che conquiso
senza moversi avrian quai più rebelli
fur d'Amor mai, da' più bei piedi snelli:
da la persona fatta in paradiso 8

prendean vita i miei spirti; or n'à diletto
il Re celeste, i suoi alati corrieri,
et io son qui rimaso ignudo et cieco. 11

Sol un conforto a le mie pene aspetto:
ch' ella che vede tutt' i miei penseri
m'impetre grazia ch' i' possa esser seco. 14

349

E' mi par d'or in ora udire il messo
che Madonna mi mande a sé chiamando;
così dentro et di for mi vo cangiando,
et sono in non molt'anni sì dimesso 4

ch' a pena riconosco omai me stesso:
tutto 'l viver usato ò messo in bando.
Sarei contento di sapere il quando,
ma pur devrebbe il tempo esser da presso. 8

O felice quel dì che del terreno
carcere uscendo, lasci rotta et sparta
questa mia grave et frale et mortal gonna 11

et da sì folte tenebre mi parta,
volando tanto su nel bel sereno
ch' i' veggia il mio Signore et la mia donna! 14

348

From the most lovely eyes and brightest face
that ever shone, from the most beautiful hair
that made the sun and gold seem not as lovely,
from sweetest speech and from the sweetest smile,

and from the hands and arms that could have conquered
without a move those who are most rebellious
to Love, from the most lovely slender feet,
and from the body made in Paradise,

my spirits took their life; now they delight
the heavenly King and his winged couriers
and I am left down here naked and blind.

I wait for just one comfort for my pain:
that she who can see every thought of mine
obtain for me the grace to be with her.

349

Sometimes I seem to hear the messenger
my lady sends to call me to herself,
so I've been changing inside and without,
and I've been so reduced in a few years

that now I hardly recognize myself!
The way I used to live I have all banished.
How happy I would be to know just when,
and yet the time could not be too far off.

Happy the day that I shall from my earthly
prison escape, leaving broken and scattered
this heavy, frail garment of my own life,

and I shall take my leave from sad thick shadows,
soaring through clearness of bright skies so high
that I may see my Lord and see my Lady.

350

Questo nostro caduco et fragil bene,
ch' è vento et ombra et à nome beltate,
non fu giamai se non in questa etate
tutto in un corpo, et ciò fu per mie pene;

ché Natura non vol, né si convene,
per far ricco un, por li altri in povertate;
or versò in una ogni sua largitate
(perdonimi qual è bella o si tene).

Non fu simil bellezza antica o nova,
né sarà, credo; ma fu sì coverta
ch' a pena se n'accorse il mondo errante.

Tosto disparve, onde 'l cangiar mi giova
la poca vista a me dal Cielo offerta
sol per piacer a le sue luci sante.

351

Dolci durezze et placide repulse
piene di casto amore et di pietate,
leggiadri sdegni che le mie infiammate
voglie tempraro (or me n'accorgo) e 'nsulse,

gentil parlar in cui chiaro refulse
con somma cortesia somma onestate,
fior di vertù, fontana di beltate,
ch' ogni basso penser del cor m'avulse,

divino sguardo da far l'uom felice,
or fiero in affrenar la mente ardita
a quel che giustamente si disdice,

or presto a confortar mia frale vita:
questo bel variar fu la radice
di mia salute, ch' altramente era ita.

350

This frail and perishable good of ours
which is a wind and shadow known as beauty
never existed, save in our own day,
all in one body, all to my own sorrow,

for Nature does not wish, nor is it fitting,
to make one rich by making others poor;
now all her riches she poured into one
(forgive me if you're beautiful, or think so).

Such beauty old or new there never was
nor will there be, I think; it was so hidden
that hardly did the erring world take note.

It quickly vanished, and I am pleased to change
the brief sight that was offered me by Heaven
for the sole pleasure of her holy eyes.

351

Sweet sternness and repulses calmly dealt,
filled with a love that's chaste and full of pity,
and charming indignation which my flaming
and vain desires tempered—now clear to me—

the gracious speech in which shone bright the highest
of courtesy with highest honesty,
flower of virtuousness, fountain of beauty,
that tore out every low thought from my heart,

glance so divine it brings man happiness,
now fierce in reining in a daring mind
from that which is forbidden, justly so,

now quick in comforting my fragile life:
this lovely variation was the root
of my salvation—without it I was lost.

352

Spirto felice che sì dolcemente
volgei quelli occhi più chiari che 'l sole
et formavi i sospiri et le parole
vive ch' ancor mi sonan ne la mente: 4

già ti vid' io d'onesto foco ardente
mover i pie' fra l'erbe et le viole
(non come donna, ma com' angel sole)
di quella ch' or m'è più che mai presente, 8

la qual tu poi, tornando al tuo Fattore,
lasciasti in terra, et quel soave velo
che per alto destin ti venne in sorte. 11

Nel tuo partir partì del mondo Amore
et Cortesia, e 'l sol cadde del cielo,
et dolce incominciò farsi la Morte. 14

353

Vago augelletto, che cantando vai
o ver piangendo il tuo tempo passato
vedendoti la notte e 'l verno a lato
e 'l dì dopo le spalle e i mesi gai, 4

se come i tuoi gravosi affanni sai,
così sapessi il mio simile stato,
verresti in grembo a questo sconsolato
a partir seco i dolorosi guai. 8

I' non so se le parti sarian pari,
ché quella cui tu piangi è forse in vita,
di ch' a me Morte e 'l Ciel son tanto avari; 11

ma la stagion et l'ora men gradita,
col membrar de' dolci anni et de li amari,
a parlar teco con pietà m'invita. 14

352

Spirit so happy who so very sweetly
would move those eyes that shone more than the sun
and who would shape the sighs and form the words
that live and still are sounding in my mind,

I saw you once aglow with virtuous fire
moving among the grass and violets
(not like a lady but an angel would)
the feet of her who lives in me forever,

whom you then, once returned to your First Maker,
left down on earth with that soft veil
that you received from highest destiny.

When you left so did Love then leave the world,
and Courtesy, the sun fell from the sky,
and Death began to taste sweet to me then.

353

O lovely little bird singing away
in tones of grief for all the time gone by,
you see the night and winter at your side,
the day and all those happy months behind;

aware as you are of your grievous troubles
could you be so of my plight as your own,
you would fly straight to the bosom of this wretch
to share with him some of his painful grief.

I cannot say our portions would be equal,
since she you weep for may still have her life
with which Heaven and Death for me are stingy;

but the forbidding season and the hour,
the memory of sweet years and bitter ones,
invites me to discuss with you my pity.

354

Deh, porgi mano a l'affannato ingegno,
Amor, et a lo stile stanco et frale
per dir di quella ch' è fatta immortale
et cittadina del celeste regno; 4

dammi, Signor, che 'l mio dir giunga al segno
de le sue lode, ove per sé non sale,
se vertù, se beltà non ebbe eguale
il mondo che d'aver lei non fu degno. 8

Responde: "Quanto 'l Ciel et io possiamo,
e i buon consigli e 'l conversar onesto,
tutto fu in lei di che noi Morte à privi; 11

forma par non fu mai dal dì ch' Adamo
aperse li occhi in prima; et basti or questo,
piangendo il dico, et tu piangendo scrivi." 14

355

O tempo, O ciel volubil che fuggendo
inganni i ciechi et miseri mortali,
O dì veloci più che vento et strali!
ora *ab experto* vostre frodi intendo. 4

Ma scuso voi et me stesso riprendo:
ché Natura a volar v'aperse l'ali,
a me diede occhi; et io pur ne' miei mali
li tenni onde vergogna et dolor prendo, 8

et sarebbe ora, et è passata omai,
di rivoltarli in più secura parte
et poner fine a l'infiniti guai. 11

Né dal tuo giogo, Amor, l'alma si parte,
ma dal suo mal, con che studio tu 'l sai:
non a caso è vertute, anzi è bell'arte. 14

354

Ah, now reach out and help my weary mind,
Love, and my fragile, worn-out style as well,
to speak of her who has become immortal
and citizen of the celestial realm;

allow, my Lord, my words to hit the final
mark of her praise—they cannot reach themselves,
such virtue and such beauty had no equal
here in our world unworthy of her presence.

He answers: "All Heaven, all that I can do,
and all good counsel and her honest talk,
was all in her of whom Death has deprived us;

"a form like hers there never was since Adam
first opened up his eyes!—let this suffice.
I speak in tears, and now in tears you write."

355

O time, O wheeling heavens that in your flight
deceive us blind and miserable mortals,
O days swifter than any wind or arrow,
now *ab experto* I have learned your frauds.

You I excuse, and I accuse myself,
for Nature gave you wings with which to fly;
she gave me eyes which I fixed only on
what did me harm, and I'm ashamed and sorry,

and it is time, the time is past already,
to turn them in a more secure direction
and put an end to all my endless woes.

Not from your yoke, Love, does my soul depart
but from my harms—and you know with what effort:
virtue's no accident, it's a fine art!

356

L'aura mia sacra al mio stanco riposo
spira sì spesso ch' i' prendo ardimento
di dirle il mal ch' i' ò sentito et sento,
che vivendo ella non sarei stat' oso. 4

I' incomincio da quel guardo amoroso
che fu principio a sì lungo tormento,
poi seguo come misero et contento
di dì in dì, d'ora in ora, Amor m'à roso. 8

Ella si tace et di pietà depinta
fiso mira pur me; parte sospira
et di lagrime oneste il viso adorna; 11

onde l'anima mia dal dolor vinta,
mentre piangendo allor seco s'adira,
sciolta dal sonno a se stessa ritorna. 14

357

Ogni giorno mi par più di mill'anni
ch' i' segua la mia fida et cara duce
che mi condusse al mondo, or mi conduce
per miglior via a vita senza affanni; 4

et non mi posson ritener l'inganni
del mondo, ch' i' 'l conosco; et tanta luce
dentro al mio core infin dal Ciel traluce
ch' i' 'ncomincio a contar il tempo e i danni. 8

Né minacce temer debbo di morte,
che 'l Re sofferse con più grave pena
per farme a seguitar constante et forte, 11

et or novellamente in ogni vena
intrò di lei che m'era data in sorte,
et non turbò la sua fronte serena. 14

356

Into my weary sleep my sacred aura
so often breathes that I become courageous
and tell her of the ills I felt and feel
which I would dare not do, were she still living.

And I start with that glance inspiring love
which was the start of such long suffering,
I follow then with how, wretched and happy,
daily, hourly, Love gnawed away at me.

She is silent, her face colored with pity,
her look fixed all on me; meanwhile she sighs,
and tears, sincere, make her face beautiful;

and then my soul, so overcome with sorrow,
starting to cry, grows angry with itself,
shaken from sleep, comes to itself again.

357

Each day to me is like a thousand years
until I follow my dear, faithful guide
who led me in the world and leads me now
by better roads to life without a care;

I cannot be held back by the deceits
of our world for I know them; so much light
shines down into my heart from high in Heaven
that I begin to count my time and losses.

Nor do I need to fear the threats of death
which with far greater pain the King once suffered
to make me strong and firm to follow Him,

and which not long ago entered each vein
of her it was my destiny to have
and did not seem to trouble her clear brow.

358

Non po far Morte il dolce viso amaro,
ma 'l dolce viso dolce po far Morte:
che bisogn' a morir ben altre scorte?
quella mi scorge ond' ogni ben imparo; 4

et quei che del suo sangue non fu avaro,
che col pe' ruppe le tartaree porte,
col suo morir par che mi riconforte.
Dunque vien, Morte, il tuo venir m'è caro, 8

et non tardar, ch' egli è ben tempo omai;
et se non fusse, e' fu 'l tempo in quel punto
che Madonna passò di questa vita. 11

D'allor inanzi, un dì non vissi mai;
seco fui in via, et seco al fin son giunto,
et mia giornata ò co' suoi pie' fornita. 14

359

Quando il soave mio fido conforto
per dar riposo a la mia vita stanca
ponsi del letto in su la sponda manca
con quel suo dolce ragionare accorto, 4
tutto di pièta et di paura smorto
dico: "Onde vien tu ora, o felice alma?"
Un ramoscel di palma
et un di lauro trae del suo bel seno,
et dice: "Dal sereno
Ciel empireo et di quelle sante parti
mi mossi, et vengo sol per consolarti." 11

In atto et in parole la ringrazio
umilemente, et poi demando: "Or donde
sai tu il mio stato?" Et ella: "Le triste onde
del pianto di che mai tu non se' sazio, 15
coll'aura de' sospir', per tanto spazio
passano al Cielo et turban la mia pace.

358

Death cannot change a sweet face into bitter,
but a sweet face can surely make Death sweet.
To die what need have I of other guides?
The one who teaches me all good guides me;

and He who was not stingy with his blood,
who broke the gates of Tartar with his foot,
from his own death it seems I take my strength.
So come Death, for your coming's dear to me,

do not delay, the time is surely right,
and were it not, the time was right the moment
my lady passed away and left this life.

From that time on I never lived a day;
with her I lived, with her I've reached the end,
and I have ended my day in her steps.

359

When that kind, faithful comforter of mine
to give my tired life a little rest
sits at my bedside there on my left side
with that sweet talk of hers so full of wisdom,
I turn pale in my anguish, and in fear
say: "Where do you come from, O happy soul?"
A little branch of palm
and a laurel one she takes from her fair bosom
and says: "From the serene
Empyrean, and from those holy parts
I came, and I come only to console you."

With words and gestures I give her my thanks
humbly and then I ask: "How do you know
about my state?" And she: "The doleful waves
of tears with which you're never satisfied,
joined with your breeze of sighs, through so much space
travel to Heaven, and they disturb my peace.

Sì forte ti dispiace
che di questa miseria sia partita
et giunta a miglior vita?
che piacer ti devria, se tu m'amasti
quanto in sembianti et ne' tuoi dir mostrasti." 22

Rispondo: "Io non piango altro che me stesso
che son rimaso in tenebre e 'n martire,
certo sempre del tuo al Ciel salire
come di cosa ch' uom vede da presso. 26
Come Dio et Natura avrebben messo
in un cor giovenil tanta vertute,
se l'eterna salute
non fusse destinata al tuo ben fare?
O de l'anime rare
ch' altamente vivesti qui tra noi
et che subito al Ciel volasti poi! 33

"Ma io che debbo altro che pianger sempre
misero et sol, che senza te son nulla!
ch' or fuss' io spento al latte et a la culla,
per non provar de l'amorose tempre!" 37
Et ella: "A che pur piangi et ti distempre?
Quanto era meglio alzar da terra l'ali,
et le cose mortali
et queste dolci tue fallaci ciance
librar con giusta lance,
et seguire me (s' è ver che tanto m'ami),
cogliendo omai qualcun di questi rami." 44

"I' volea demandar," respond' io allora:
"che voglion importar quelle due frondi?"
Et ella: "Tu medesmo ti rispondi,
tu la cui penna tanto l'una onora. 48
Palma è vittoria, et io giovene ancora
vinsi il mondo et me stessa; il lauro segna
triunfo, ond' io son degna
mercé di quel Signor che mi die' forza.
Or tu, s' altri ti sforza,
a lui ti svolgi, a lui chiedi soccorso
sì che siam seco al fine del tuo corso." 55

Does it displease you so
that I have gone from all this misery
to reach a better life?
You should be pleased, if you loved me as much
as you showed in the way you looked and wrote."

I answer: "I weep only for myself
who have been left in darkness and in pain,
always as certain that you rose to Heaven
as one is of a thing he sees up close.
How could both God and Nature have infused
a heart that was so young with so much virtue
if heavenly salvation
had not been preordained for your good deeds,
O one of those rare souls
who lived down here so nobly among us
and afterward flew quickly up to Heaven.

"But what is there for me to do but weep,
I, wretched and alone, without you nothing!
I should have died an infant in my crib
so not to have experienced love's tempering."
And she: "Why do you struggle and still weep?
Much better had you raised your wings from earth
and all these mortal things
and all this sweet, vain chattering of yours,
weighed on an accurate scale
and followed me (if you love me so much)
finally gathering one of these branches."

"I wanted to ask you," I answer then,
"what implications do those two leaves have?"
And she says: "You can answer for yourself,
who with your pen so honors one of them.
The palm is victory, and I still young,
conquered the world and myself; laurel means
triumph, of which I'm worthy,
thanks to that Lord who gave me strength enough.
Now if you're being forced,
turn toward Him, and ask Him for his help
so we may be with Him at your life's end."

"Son questi i capei biondi et l'aureo nodo,"
dich' io: "ch' ancor mi stringe, et quei belli occhi
che fur mio sol?" "Non errar con li sciocchi,
né parlar," dice, "o creder a lor modo.
Spirito ignudo sono e 'n Ciel mi godo;
quel che tu cerchi è terra già molt'anni.
Ma per trarti d'affanni
m'è dato a parer tale, et ancor quella
sarò più che mai bella,
a te più cara, sì selvaggia et pia,
salvando inseme tua salute et mia."

I' piango; et ella il volto
co le sue man m'asciuga, et poi sospira
dolcemente, et s'adira
con parole che i sassi romper ponno;
et dopo questo si parte ella e 'l sonno.

360

Quel antiquo mio dolce empio signore
fatto citar dinanzi a la reina
che la parte divina
tien di nostra natura e 'n cima sede,
ivi com' oro che nel foco affina
mi rappresento carco di dolore,
di paura et d'orrore,
quasi uom che teme morte et ragion chiede.
E 'ncomincio: "Madonna, il manco piedo
giovenetto pos' io nel costui regno,
ond' altro ch' ira et sdegno
non ebbi mai; et tanti et sì diversi
tormenti ivi soffersi
ch' alfine vinta fu quell'infinita
mia pazienzia, e 'n odio ebbi la vita.

"Così 'l mio tempo infin qui trapassato
è in fiamma e 'n pene; et quante utili oneste
vie sprezzai, quante feste,

"Is this the blond hair and the golden knot,"
I say, "that still bind me, and those fair eyes
that were all mine?" "Do not err like those fools,
nor speak," she says, "or think the way they do.
I'm naked spirit, and I rejoice in Heaven;
what you seek is the dust of many years;
to help you in your troubles
I am allowed to seem so, and again
shall be, still lovelier,
more dear to you, who once so harsh and kind
saved your salvation and my own at once."

I weep; and she then dries
my face with both her hands, and then she sighs
with sweetness and she scolds
with words that could have shattered stone to pieces;
and after this she leaves as does my sleep.

360

That old and sweet yet cruel master of mine
I had called to the justice of the queen
who holds the part divine
of our own nature sitting at its summit;
and there like gold that is refined in flames
I make my plaint surrounded by my pain,
by fear and by my horror,
like one in fear of death who begs for justice;
and I begin: "My lady, my left foot
when I was young I put into his realm
which brought me scorn and anger
and nothing more; and many and such strange
torments I suffered there
until my endless patience finally
was overcome, and then I hated life.

"And so until now all my time was spent
in flame, in pain; how many good and useful
paths I disdained, the joys,

per servir questo lusinghier crudele!
Et qual ingegno à sì parole preste
che stringer possa 'l mio infelice stato
et le mie d'esto ingrato
tante et sì gravi et sì giuste querele?
O poco mel, molto aloe con fele,
in quanto amaro à la mia vita avezza
con sua falsa dolcezza,
la qual m'atrasse a l'amorosa schiera!
che, s' i' non m'inganno, era
disposto a sollevarmi alto da terra;
e' mi tolse di pace et pose in guerra.

"Questi m'à fatto men amare Dio
ch' i' non deveva, et men curar me stesso;
per una donna ò messo
egualmente in non cale ogni pensero.
Di ciò m'è stato consiglier sol esso,
sempr'aguzzando il giovenil desio
a l'empia cote, ond' io
sperai riposo al suo giogo aspro et fero.
Misero, a che quel caro ingegno altero
et l'altre doti a me date dal Cielo?
ché vo cangiando 'l pelo,
né cangiar posso l'ostinata voglia.
Così in tutto mi spoglia
di libertà questo crudel ch' i' accuso,
ch' amaro viver m'à vòlto in dolce uso.

"Cercar m'à fatto deserti paesi,
fiere et ladri rapaci, ispidi dumi,
dure genti et costumi,
et ogni error che' pellegrini intrica;
monti valli paludi et mari et fiumi,
mille lacciuoli in ogni parte tesi,
e 'l verno in strani mesi
con pericol presente et con fatica.
Né costui né quell'altra mia nemica
ch' i' fuggia mi lasciavan sol un punto;
onde s' i' non son giunto
anzi tempo da morte acerba et dura,
pietà celeste à cura

to serve so cruel a flatterer as this!
And what wit has the words appropriate
that can embrace all my unhappiness
and all my just and grave
complaints against the ingrate that he is?
O honey scarce, all vinegar and aloe!
To how much bitterness he has accustomed
my life with his false sweetness
which drew me to his flock of amorous!
For, if I'm right, I think
I was disposed to rise high from this earth.
He took my peace and put me into war!

"And this one here has made me love my God
less than I should and care less for myself;
and for a lady's sake
I care for nothing one way or another.
In that he's been my only counselor,
sharpening constantly my young desire
with his cruel whetstone—I
hoped for a rest from his fierce, bitter yoke.
Wretch! Why were high, bright intellect like mine
and other gifts bestowed on me by Heaven?
For though my hair is turning,
from my obstinate will I cannot turn.
Of all my liberty
I am despoiled by this one I accuse
who's turned a bitter life into sweet habit.

"He made me search among the wilderness,
wild beasts, rapacious thieves and thorny bush,
barbarous people, customs,
and all the hardships that entangle travelers;
the mountains, valleys, marshes, seas and rivers,
and with a thousand snares spread everywhere,
and winter in strange months,
with danger imminent and with fatigue.
Never did this one or my other foe
from whom I fled leave me a single moment;
so if I've not been taken
before my time by hard and unripe death,
heavenly pity cares

di mia salute, non questo tiranno
che del mio duol si pasce et del mio danno.

“Poi che suo fui non ebbi ora tranquilla
né spero aver, et le mie notti il sonno
sbandiro, et più non ponno
per erbe o per incanti a sé ritrarlo;
per inganni et per forza è fatto donno
sovra miei spirti, et non sonò poi squilla
ov’ io sia in qualche villa
ch’ i’ non l’udisse. Ei sa che ’l vero parlo,
ché legno vecchio mai non rose tarlo
come questi ’l mio core, in che s’annida
et di morte lo sfida.
Quinci nascon le lagrime e i martiri,
le parole e i sospiri,
di ch’ io mi vo stancando et forse altrui.
Giudica tu, che me conosci et lui.”

Il mio adversario con agre rampogne
comincia: “O Donna, intendi l’altra parte
che ’l vero (onde si parte
quest’ingrato) dirà senza defetto.
Questi in sua prima età fu dato a l’arte
da vender parolette (anzi menzogne);
né par che si vergogne,
tolto da quella noia al mio diletto,
lamentarsi di me, che puro et netto
contra ’l desio, che spesso il suo mal vole,
lui tenni (ond’ or si dole)
in dolce vita, ch’ ei miseria chiama,
salito in qualche fama
solo per me, che ’l suo intelletto alzai
ov’ alzato per sé non fora mai.

“Ei sa che ’l grande Atride et l’alto Achille,
et Anibàl al terren vostro amaro,
et di tutti il più chiaro—
un altro et di vertute et di fortuna—
com’ a ciascun le sue stelle ordinaro
lasciai cader in vil amor d’ancille;
et a costui di mille
donne elette eccellenti n’elessi una,

for my salvation and not this tyrant here
who feeds upon my sorrow and my loss.

"Since I've been his, I've known no peaceful hour,
nor do I hope for any, and my nights
have banished sleep and cannot
recall it, not with medicine or magic;
by force and by deceit he has become
lord of my spirits; since then no bell has sounded,
whatever town I'm in,
that I've not heard. He knows I speak the truth,
for never did a worm gnaw at old wood
as this one does my heart in which he nests
and threatens it with death.
From this are born my suffering and tears,
all of my words and sighs
that wear me out, and others, too, perhaps.
You be the judge, you know the both of us."

My adversary bitterly reproaching
begins: "O Lady, hear the other side
because the truth from which
this ingrate parts, I shall tell you entirely.
This fellow here when young practiced the art
of selling little words, or rather lies,
nor does he seem ashamed
(from boredom I took him to my delights)
to complain of me who kept him pure and clean
of the desire that often wants its harm
(and now he grieves), kept him
in a sweet life which he calls misery,
and risen to some fame
only through me who raised his mind to where
it never could have risen on its own.

"He knows that high Achilles and great Atrides
and Hannibal, so bitter to your country,
and another who in virtue,
in fortune, was the brightest of them all,
as for each one of them his stars ordained,
I let fall in base love of a slave girl
and for this one, out of
a thousand choices, fine ladies I chose one—

qual non si vedrà mai sotto la luna
benché Lucrezia ritornasse a Roma;
et sì dolce idioma
le diedi et un cantar tanto soave
che penser basso o grave
non potè mai durar dinanzi a lei.
Questi fur con costui l'inganni mei,

"questo fu il fel, questi li sdegni et l'ire,
più dolci assai che di null'altra il tutto!
Di bon seme mal frutto
mieto, et tal merito à chi 'ngrato serve.
Sì l'avea sotto l'ali mie condutto
ch' a donne et cavalier piacea il suo dire;
et sì alto salire
il feci che tra' caldi ingegni ferve
il suo nome, et de' suoi detti conserve
si fanno con diletto in alcun loco;
ch' or saria forse un roco
mormorador di corti, un uom del vulgo!
I' l'esalto et divulgo
per quel ch' elli 'mparò ne la mia scola
et da colei che fu nel mondo sola.

"Et per dir a l'estremo il gran servigio,
da mille atti inonesti l'ò ritratto,
ché mai per alcun patto
a lui piacer non poteo cosa vile
(giovene schivo et vergognoso in atto
et in penser) poi che fatto era uom ligio
di lei ch' alto vestigio
l'impresse al core et fecel suo simile.
Quanto à del pellegrino et del gentile,
da lei tene et da me, di cui si biasma.
Mai notturno fantasma
d'error non fu sì pien com' ei ver noi,
ch' è in grazia, da poi
che ne conobbe, a Dio et a la gente:
di ciò il superbo si lamenta et pente.

"Ancor, et questo è quel che tutto avanza,
da volar sopra 'l ciel li avea dat' ali

like her the world will never know another,
not even if Rome had Lucretia back;
so sweet a way of speaking
I gave her and such softness in her song,
that vile, unpleasant thought
could not survive within that lady's presence.
And these are what he thinks are my deceptions,

"this was the wormwood, these the scorn and anger,
far greater than full joy of other women!
From good seed rotten fruit
I reap—my pay for serving such an ingrate!
I took such care of him under my wing
that knights and ladies found his words appealing;
and I raised him so high
that there among the brilliant wits shines out
his name, and there are those who with great pleasure
collect his poetry in different places—
he might have been a hoarse
murmurer of the courts, a common man!
I raise him, make him famous
by means of what he learned in my own school
and from that one and only in the world.

"To mention finally my greatest service,
I kept him from a thousand vicious acts,
for in no way at all
could he find pleasure in a thing that's vile:
a youngster shy and modest in his acts
and thoughts, and then become the leige of her
who left a deep impression
within his heart and made him like herself.
All that is rare and noble in this man
derives from her, and me he criticizes.
Nocturnal ghosts were never
more full of error than he is toward us,
for since he has known us,
he's had the grace of God and of the people—
and that this haughty man regrets and grieves.

"And there is more (and this outdoes them all),
I gave him wings to fly beyond the sky,

per le cose mortali,
che son scala al Fattor, chi ben l'estima:
ché mirando ei ben fiso quante et quali
eran vertuti in quella sua speranza,
d'una in altra sembianza
potea levarsi a l'alta cagion prima, 143
et ei l'à detto alcuna volta in rima.
Or m'à posto in oblio con quella donna
ch' i' li die' per colonna
de la sua frale vita." A questo un strido
lagrimoso alzo, et grido:
"Ben me la die', ma tosto la ritolse!"
Responde: "Io no, ma chi per sé la volse." 150

Alfin ambo conversi al giusto seggio,
i' con tremanti, ei con voci alte et crude,
ciascun per sé conchiude:
"Nobile Donna, tua sentenzia attendo."
Ella allor, sorridendo:
"Piacemi aver vostre questioni udite,
ma più tempo bisogna a tanta lite." 157

361

Dicemi spesso il mio fidato speglio,
l'animo stanco, et la cangiata scorza
et la scemata mia destrezza et forza:
"Non ti nasconder più, tu se' pur veglio; 4

"obedir a Natura in tutto è il meglio,
ch' a contender con lei 'l tempo ne sforza."
Subito allor, com' acqua 'l foco amorza,
d'un lungo et grave sonno mi risveglio; 8

et veggio ben che 'l nostro viver vola
et ch' esser non si po più d'una volta;
e 'n mezzo 'l cor mi sona una parola 11

di lei ch' è or dal suo bel nodo sciolta
ma ne' suoi giorni al mondo fu sì sola
ch' a tutte, s' i' non erro, fama à tolta. 14

through mortal things which are,
if you think well, the ladder to our Maker:
for fixing firm his gaze upon the great
and many virtues in that hope of his,
from one thing to the next
he could have risen to the high First Cause— 143
he's said as much at times in his own verse.
Now he's forgotten both me and that lady
I gave him as a column
for his frail life." At this I scream out loud
and weeping I cry out:
"He gave me her but quickly took her back!"
"Not I," he says, "but One who wanted her." 150

And then, both turned to face the seat of justice,
I trembling, he with cruel and high-pitched voice,
each one of us concludes:
"Noble Lady, your sentence I await."
And then she with a smile:
"It was a pleasure to have heard your pleas,
but I will need more time for such a lawsuit." 157

361

I am told often by my faithful mirror
and by my weary soul and changing skin,
by my diminished strength and liveliness:
"Admit it to yourself now, you are old; 4

"obey whatever nature says, it's better,
for time takes power from us to oppose her."
Then quick as water putting out a fire
I wake up from a long and heavy sleep, 8

and I see clearly that our life flies by
and that you have only one life to live;
and in my heart there sounds a single word 11

of her now loosened from her lovely knot
but in her day so rare upon the earth
that I think she took fame from all the others. 14

362

Volo con l'ali de' pensieri al Cielo
sì spesse volte che quasi un di loro
esser mi par ch' àn ivi il suo tesoro,
lasciando in terra lo squarciato velo.

Talor mi trema 'l cor d'un dolce gelo,
udendo lei per ch' io mi discoloro
dirmi: "Amico, or t'am' io et or t'onoro
perch' à' i costumi variati e 'l pelo."

Menami al suo Signor; allor m'inchino,
pregando umilemente che consenta
ch' i' stia a veder et l'uno et l'altro volto.

Responde: "Egli è ben fermo il tuo destino,
et per tardar ancor vent'anni o trenta
parrà a te troppo, et non fia però molto."

363

Morte à spento quel sol ch' abagliar suolmi,
e 'n tenebre son li occhi interi et saldi;
terra è quella ond' io ebbi et freddi et caldi,
spenti son i miei lauri, or querce et olmi,

di ch' io veggio 'l mio ben et parte duolmi.
Non è chi faccia et paventosi et baldi
i miei penser, né chi li agghiacci et scaldi,
né chi gl'empia di speme et di duol colmi.

Fuor di man di colui che punge et molce,
che già fece di me sì lungo strazio,
mi trovo in libertate amara et dolce;

et al Signor ch' io adoro et ch' i' ringrazio,
che pur col ciglio il ciel governa et folce,
torno stanco di viver, non che sazio.

362

With wings made of my thoughts I fly to Heaven
so often that I almost think I'm one
of those who have their treasure with them there,
now having left on earth the rendered veil.

Sometimes from a sweet chill my heart will tremble
when I hear her, for whom my face grows pale,
say: "Friend I love you now, and honor you
because you've changed your ways as well as hair."

She takes me to her Lord, and I kneel down,
humbly begging that He grant me permission
to stay and look upon both of their faces.

He answers: "Your destiny is firmly fixed;
to wait another twenty years or thirty
may seem too much, but it will not be long."

363

Death has put out the sun that dazzled me;
my vigorous, strong eyes are in the dark;
dust is the one who made me cold and hot,
dead are my laurels, now turned oaks and elms

in which I see my good but still am pained;
there is no one to put boldness and fear
into my thoughts, no one to freeze and heat them,
to fill with hope, to overflow with sorrow.

Out of the hands of him who stabs and soothes,
who once put me through one of his long tortures,
I find myself in freedom bittersweet;

and to the Lord whom I adore and thank,
Who keeps and holds all Heaven with His brow,
I turn, weary of life, sick of it all.

364

Tennemi Amor anni ventuno ardendo
lieto nel foco et nel duol pien di speme;
poi che Madonna e 'l mio cor seco inseme
saliro al Ciel, dieci altri anni piangendo. 4

Omai son stanco, et mia vita reprendo
di tanto error che di vertute il seme
à quasi spento; et le mie parti estreme,
alto Dio, a te devotamente rendo 8

pentito et tristo de' miei sì spesi anni,
che spender si deveano in miglior uso,
in cercar pace et in fuggir affanni. 11

Signor che 'n questo carcer m'ài rinchiuso:
tramene salvo da li eterni danni,
ch' i' conosco 'l mio fallo et non lo scuso. 14

365

I' vo piangendo i miei passati tempi
i quai posi in amar cosa mortale
senza levarmi a volo, abbiend' io l'ale
per dar forse di me non bassi esempi. 4

Tu che vedi i miei mali indegni et empi,
Re del Cielo, invisibile, immortale:
soccorri a l'alma disviata et frale
e 'l suo defetto di tua grazia adempi, 8

sì che, s' io vissi in guerra et in tempesta,
mora in pace et in porto; et se la stanza
fu vana, almen sia la partita onesta. 11

A quel poco di viver che m'avanza
et al morir degni esser tua man presta:
Tu sai ben che 'n altrui non ò speranza. 14

364

Twenty-one years Love kept me burning gladly
within his flame and full of hope in sorrow;
then, since my lady and my heart as one
went up to Heaven, another ten years weeping.

Now I am weary and I blame my life
for its long error which almost destroyed
in me the seed of virtue; my life's last part,
High God, to you I render most devoutly,

repentant, sorry, for my years spent thus,
years that I should have put to better use,
in search of peace, in flight from worldly troubles.

Lord, you who have enclosed me in this prison,
now take me, save me from eternal harm,
I know my fault and do not justify it.

365

I go my way lamenting those past times
I spent in loving something which was mortal
instead of soaring high, since I had wings
that might have taken me to higher levels.

You who see all my shameful, wicked errors,
King of all Heaven, invisible, immortal,
help this frail soul of mine for she has strayed,
and all her emptiness fill up with grace,

so that, having once lived in storms, at war,
I may now die in peace, in port; and if my stay
was vain, at least let my departure count.

Over the little life that still remains to me,
and at my death, deign that your hand be present:
You know You are the only hope I have.

366

Vergine bella, che di sol vestita,
coronata di stelle, al sommo Sole
piacesti sì che 'n te sua luce ascose:
amor mi spinge a dir di te parole,
ma non so 'ncominciar senza tu' aita
et di colui ch' amando in te si pose. 6
Invoco lei che ben sempre rispose
chi la chiamò con fede.
Vergine, s' a mercede
miseria estrema de l'umane cose
giamai ti volse, al mio prego t'inchina,
soccorri a la mia guerra
ben ch' i' sia terra et tu del Ciel regina. 13

Vergine saggia et del bel numero una
de le beate vergini prudenti,
anzi la prima et con più chiara lampa,
o saldo scudo de le afflitte genti
contr' a' colpi di Morte et di Fortuna,
sotto 'l qual si triunfa, non pur scampa, 19
o refrigerio al cieco ardor ch' avampa
qui fra i mortali sciocchi:
Vergine, que' belli occhi
che vider tristi la spietata stampa
ne' dolci membri del tuo caro figlio
volgi al mio dubio stato
che sconsigliato a te ven per consiglio. 26

Vergine pura, d'ogni parte intera,
del tuo parto gentil figliuola et madre,
ch' allumi questa vita et l'altra adorni:
per te il tuo Figlio et quel del sommo Padre
(o fenestra del Ciel lucente altera)
venne a salvarne in su li estremi giorni, 32
et fra tutt' i terreni altri soggiorni
sola tu fosti eletta.
Vergine benedetta
che 'l pianto d'Eva in allegrezza torni:
fammi, che puoi, de la sua grazia degno,
senza fine o beata,
già coronata nel superno regno. 39

366

Virgin, so lovely, clothed in the sun's light
and crowned with stars, so pleased the highest Sun
that inside you He chose to hide his light:
love urges me to speak of you in verse,
but I cannot begin without your help
and His who loving placed himself in you.
I call upon the one who always answered
whoever called with faith.
Virgin, if toward mercy
for extreme misery of worldly things
you ever turned, then bend now to my prayer,
and help me in my war,
though I am dust and you are queen of Heaven.

Virgin so wise, one of the lovely number
of all the blessèd, prudent virgins—rather,
the first of them and with the brightest light,
O sturdy shield for all who are afflicted
against the blows that Death and Fortune wield
beneath which they're triumphant, more than saved,
O refuge from blind ardor that is raging
in foolish mortals here.
Virgin, those lovely eyes
that saw in sorrow those pitiless wounds
upon the sweet limbs of your cherished son,
turn to my dangerous state,
who come imprudent to you for your help.

Virgin so pure and perfect in all ways,
mother and the daughter both of your own child,
who brighten this life and adorn the other;
through you your Son, Son of the highest Father
(O shining, lofty window of the Heavens)
came down to save us in the final days,
and you among all earthly dwelling places
He chose—and only you.
Virgin so blessed and holy,
who change the tears of Eve to happiness,
make me, for you can, worthy of this grace,
O blessèd without end,
already crowned in the supernal realm.

Vergine santa, d'ogni grazia piena,
che per vera et altissima umiltate
salisti al ciel ond' e' miei preghi ascolti:
tu partoristi il Fonte di pietate
et di giustizia il Sol che rasserena
il secol pien d'errori oscuri et folti. 45
Tre dolci et cari nomi ài in te raccolti,
madre, figliuola et sposa,
Vergine gloriosa,
donna del Re che nostri lacci à sciolti
et fatto 'l mondo libero et felice,
ne le cui sante piaghe
prego ch' appaghe il cor, vera beatrice. 52

Vergine sola al mondo, senza esempio,
che 'l Ciel di tue bellezze innamorasti,
cui né prima fu simil né seconda:
santi penseri, atti pietosi et casti
al vero Dio sacrato et vivo tempio
fecero in tua verginità feconda. 58
Per te po la mia vita esser ioconda
s' a' tuoi preghi, o Maria,
Vergine dolce et pia,
ove 'l fallo abondò la grazia abonda.
Con le ginocchia de la mente inchine
prego che sia mia scorta
et la mia torta via drizzi a buon fine. 65

Vergine chiara et stabile in eterno,
di questo tempestoso mare stella,
d'ogni fedel nocchier fidata guida:
pon mente in che terribile procella
i' mi ritrovo sol, senza governo,
et ò già da vicin l'ultime strida. 71
Ma pur in te l'anima mia si fida,
peccatrice, i' nol nego,
Vergine, ma ti prego
che 'l tuo nemico del mio mal non rida.
Ricorditi che fece il peccar nostro
prender Dio per scamparne
umana carne al tuo virginal chiostro. 78

Virgin so holy, full of every grace,
who through your true and high humility
rose up to Heaven where you hear my prayers,
who brought into this world the Fount of pity,
the Sun of justice who brightens the world
which is so full of error dark and thick;
three sweet and cherished names you have collected:
mother, daughter, and bride;
Virgin so glorious,
bride of the King who freed us from our bonds
and made the world a free and happy place,
upon whose holy wounds
I pray, quiet my heart, true Beatrix.

Virgin without an equal in the world,
whose beauty made all Heaven fall in love,
whom no one could surpass or even reach,
your holy thoughts, your actions kind and chaste
prepared a consecrated, living temple
of rich virginity for the true God.
Through you my life can know what joy is like,
if through your prayers, O Mary,
Virgin so sweet and pious,
grace will abound where sin abounded once.
And with the knee of my mind bent in prayer
I beg you be my guide,
direct my twisted path to a good end.

Virgin eternal, bright and stable star
above all this tempestuous sea of ours,
the faithful guide of every faithful helmsman,
consider now how frightening is the storm
I'm caught in all alone without a tiller,
and I am close to my last drowning shouts.
But nonetheless in you my soul still trusts,
though it, no doubt, be sinful,
Virgin, but I beg
you not to let your foe have the last laugh.
Remember that it was our sin made God
take on, for our salvation,
the flesh of man in your virginal cloister.

Vergine, quante lagrime ò già sparte,
quante lusinghe et quanti preghi indarno,
pur per mia pena et per mio grave danno!
Da poi ch' i' nacqui in su la riva d'Arno,
cercando or questa et or quell'altra parte,
non è stata mia vita altro ch' affanno: 84
mortal bellezza, atti et parole m'ànno
tutta ingombrata l'alma.
Vergine sacra et alma,
non tardar, ch' i' son forse a l'ultimo anno;
i dì miei più correnti che saetta
fra miserie et peccati
son sen' andati et sol Morte n'aspetta. 91

Vergine, tale è terra et posto à in doglia
lo mio cor, che vivendo in pianto il tenne
et de mille miei mali un non sapea;
et per saperlo pur quel che n'avenne
fora avvenuto, ch' ogni altra sua voglia
era a me morte et a lei fama rea. 97
Or tu, Donna del ciel, tu nostra Dea
(se dir lice et convensi),
Vergine d'alti sensi:
tu vedi il tutto, et quel che non potea
far altri è nulla a la tua gran vertute:
por fine al mio dolore
ch' a te onore et a me fia salute. 104

Vergine in cui ò tutta mia speranza,
che possi et vogli al gran bisogno aitarme:
non mi lasciare in su l'estremo passo;
non guardar me, ma chi degnò crearme,
no 'l mio valor, ma l'alta sua sembianza
ch' è in me ti mova a curar d'uom sì basso. 110
Medusa et l'error mio m'àn fatto un sasso
d'umor vano stillante.
Vergine, tu di sante
lagrime et pie adempi 'l meo cor lasso,
ch' almen l'ultimo pianto sia devoto,
senza terrestro limo,
come fu 'l primo non d'insania voto. 117

Virgin, how many tears I've shed already,
how many flattering words and prayers in vain
for nothing but my pain and grievous loss!
Since I was born upon the Arno's banks,
then wandering from one place to another,
my life has always been nothing but trouble.
Mortal beauty, actions, and words are what
have burdened all my soul.
Virgin holy, bountiful,
do not delay, this could be my last year;
my days more swift than arrows have sped off
through wretchedness and sin,
and there is only Death awaiting me.

Virgin, that one is dust and holds in grief
my heart, who while alive kept it in tears
and of my thousand sufferings knew not one;
and even had she known them then, what happened
would still have happened—had she wished otherwise,
it would have meant my death and her dishonor.
Now you, Lady of Heaven, you our Goddess,
(if such a term be fitting),
Virgin of superb senses,
you can see all, and what could not be done
by others is no match for your great power:
end now my suffering
and bring honor to you, to me salvation.

Virgin, in whom I place all of my hope
you can and will help me in my great need:
do not abandon me at the last pass,
not for my sake but His who made me man,
let not my own worth but His own high likeness
in me move you to care for one so low.
Medusa and my sin turned me to stone
dripping useless moisture.
Virgin, now with repentant
and holy tears fill up my weary heart;
at least let my last weeping be devout,
without the mud of earth,
as was the first and insane vow of mine.

Vergine umana et nemica d'orgoglio:
del comune principio amor t'induca
miserere d'un cor contrito umile;
ché se poca mortal terra caduca
amar con sì mirabil fede soglio,
che devrò far di te, cosa gentile?
Se dal mio stato assai misero et vile
per le tue man resurgo,
Vergine, i' sacro et purgo
al tuo nome et pensieri e 'ngegno et stile,
la lingua e 'l cor, le lagrime e i sospiri.
Scorgimi al miglior guado
et prendi in grado i cangiati desiri.

Il dì s'appressa et non pote esser lunge,
sì corre il tempo et vola,
Vergine unica et sola,
e 'l cor or conscienzia or morte punge:
raccomandami al tuo Figliuol, verace
omo et verace Dio,
ch' accolga 'l mio spirto ultimo in pace.

Virgin so kind, the enemy of pride,
let love of our same origin move you,
have pity on a sorry, humble heart;
for if a bit of mortal, fleeting dust
can make me love with faith so marvelous,
how then will I love you, a noble thing?
If from my state so wretched and so vile
I rise up at your hands,
Virgin, then in your name
I cleanse and give my thoughts and wit and style,
my tongue and heart, my tears and sighs to you.
Show me a better crossing
and please look kindly on my changed desires.

The day draws near, it cannot be far off;
time runs and flies so fast,
Virgin, the one and only one,
and death and conscience now stab at my heart;
commend me to your Son who is the true
man and the truth of God,
that He accept my final breath in peace.

NOTES AND COMMENTARY

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1 SONNET

In this introductory sonnet, Petrarch speaks, from outside the narrative he is about to begin, of a time completed, as if he stands on an overlook observing his own history unfolding below. The poem was probably written around 1347 when he decided to put his poems in order for publication (and before the death of Laura, according to Wilkins and others).

1. *these scattered verses*: Poems written over a long period of time, gathered and collected in this book. *Rime sparse* is the Italian version of Petrarch's Latin title *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta.*

2. *sighs with which I fed my heart*: In the language of medieval love poetry, the heart receives a mortal wound and is kept alive with the help of lamentations.

3. *errant youthful days*: Errant (*errore*) signifies in Petrarch the behavior of one deluded, bewildered, and impassioned.

4. *in part*: He has changed his outlook since first taking up his pen, recalling his youthful self as a distinct part of the whole person he wishes to reconstruct.

5. *for all the ways*: All the various and often contradictory moods of the poems which follow.

7. *anyone who knows love through its trials*: More than knowing about love with the intellect, the compassionate person will know it from painful experience. Cf. Dante's sonnet, "O you who travel on the road of Love," in *Vita nuova* VII.

9. *become the talk*: The object of wonder and speculation. The line has sources in Horace and Ovid.

11. *shame*: Petrarch makes triple reference to himself as object here, heaping blame on his errors. See Dante, *Inferno* II, 3–4, for a triple reference to self as subject. See also *Vita nuova* III, where Dante introduces his maiden sonnet.

14. *fleeting dream*: Corresponding to his "errant youthful days."

2 SONNET

Always before impervious to love, he gazed with new eyes for a moment, with instant, fatal results.

Love (Amor) is given a variety of guises in the *Canzoniere*. Often he has the character of the feudal lord in whose traces the lover labors. At times he is indistinguishable from Laura, especially in his capacity as winged archer or advisor. In poem 360, he appears to be satanic, but at times he is just a step away from a Christ figure when he is addressed fervently as "Lord." Always formidable, he is rarely described as a pretty Cupid. In this sonnet, Love resembles the Greek Eros, whose failure to overwhelm the poet in the past has made him vengeful. According to Hesiod, Eros was not only the god of sensual love but a power which forms the world by inner union of separate elements.

1. *graceful revenge*: Love's skill with the bow was elegant, playful, and targeted with perfect accuracy at him.

2. *a thousand wrongs*: So many earlier rebuffs of Love's power.

3. *secretly*: Love's assault came from a new and unexpected direction.

5. *concentrated in my heart*: His heart was fertile ground at the moment Love struck.

6. *raised its defense*: Meeting the gaze of the lady, his eyes formed a path for love to and from his heart.

7. *struck the mortal blow*: He received her glance.

8. *had been blunted*: From the hardness of his heart up until that moment.

12. *lead me cleverly*: *Accortamente*, literally, "with expertise."

13. *high, hard mountain*: His former citadel of detachment, reason.

3 SONNET

The exact time of his falling in love is established.

1. *It was the day the sun's ray had turned pale*: The day of the Passion of Christ, 6 April 1327, according to poem 211 and the *Triumph of Death*, 133–134. There is general agreement that Petrarch was not referring to the variable date of Good Friday but to the date fixed by the death of Christ in absolute time, the *feria sexta aprilis*, which in 1327 fell on Monday.

According to the Vulgate version of the Gospels (Matt. 27:45, Mark 15:33, and Luke 23:44), the sun darkened from the hours of six to nine as Christ was dying.

4. *lovely eyes had bound me*: The "assault" of poem 2.9 was coincidental with the lady's glance, which is now shown to have imprisoned him.

5. *It seemed no time*: On a day of mourning of the faithful, Good Friday. The mention of inappropriateness applies in several senses, one of which is that war has intruded in the holy place where Petrarch first saw Laura, reportedly the church of St. Clare in Avignon.

8. *universal woe*: Grief of all Christians over the Crucifixion.

10. *to reach my heart*: The eyes, undefended by reason, took in love upon meeting her glance.

11. *halls and doors*: Later we learn that Laura's eyes as well as his were tearful.

13. *in my state*: Unarmed.

14. *and to you, armed*: And she firm against the assaults of love.

4 SONNET

By miraculous providence divine Laura, a sun, is born in a humble unnamed town.

1. *That one*: God.

4. *created Jove more mild than Mars*: Made the benign influence of the planet Jupiter greater than the malign influence of Mars.

5. *Who coming*: Christ in his coming revealed the prophesied truths of the Old Testament.

7. *from the nets*: Christ chose his disciples from among humble fishermen.

9–11. *who with His birth did . . . / . . . exalt humility*: God chose this place for Laura's birth, just as he chose Judea rather than Rome for the birth of Christ—an ironic reference to Avignon, chosen over Rome as the seat of the papacy.

12. *He's given us*: Comparing the birth of Laura with the coming of Christ has seemed to some the epitome of pride, even a sacrilege. For whatever reason, Petrarch here yokes pride and humility together in somewhat the same way that he imposed love and war on the compassion of Good Friday in 3.5–6.

13. *we thank Nature and place*: God provided the idea for her, Nature fashioned her with "marvelous workmanship," and destiny marked the place of her birth. Cf. Dante, *Convivio* III, 4.

5 SONNET

The poem is a play on Laura's name in the latinized version of the French Laurette—LAURETA. Such naming of the beloved has many precedents. Petrarch's Laureta also contains multiple allusions expanded upon throughout the collection. Its airiness, color, and music are particularly emphasized here as well as its connection with poetic tradition in the form *lauro* (laurel). The name Laura itself appears in the *Canzoniere* only twice: in 291.4 and 332.50, but an alternate version occurs often. The *Etymology* of Isidore of Seville defined *laurus* as *laudes*, the principal panegyrical topos of Greek antiquity—very much the topic of this sonnet. However, another sense is alluded to here in the etymological link between laurel, a Dionysian intoxicant, and the labyrinth (with its source in *lavr-laur-labyr*, cave or stone), both subtexts in the poems that connect delirium, forgetfulness, and infernal researches with poetic process.

1. *call for you*: To utter her name aloud, releasing its power.

3. *the sound at the beginning*: The first syllable of the name connotes worship: He who utters it praises his lady from the very beginning.

4. *sweet accents*: The Italian gerund *laudando* is a notably soft, drawn-out word, like a sigh.

5. *REgal state*: The Italian *real* is an abbreviation of *regale*, "queenly." Laura possesses a majesty that sets her apart from all other women. But she is also "real" flesh and blood.

6. *doubles my strength*: The syllable *RE* has a double sense that reinforces the evocative power of her name.

high enterprise: The poet's task of revering and praising Laura. Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* XVIII.

7. *but "TAcitly," the end cries*: The final syllable of LAURETA hints of the end of life. A frequent theme of the poems is that he must strive to do honor to her and himself by keeping the whole of his life in mind while judging carefully its particulars.

8. *better shoulders*: A nod to the poetic tradition, and to Apollo, god of poetry.

9. *to LAUd and to REvere*: He calls attention again to the deeper meanings of the precious syllables. One has only to call her name to pay homage to her truth.

12. *Apollo be offended*: This is the first of many allusions to the myth of Apollo and Daphne as found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* I. In that legend, Apollo, not immune to love, became enamored of the beautiful maiden Daphne, who spurned him. Pursued by the passionate prideful god, Daphne fled through the forests until, on appeal for rescue to the river that engendered her, she was turned into the laurel tree. Apollo claimed this tree for his own.

13. *morTAl*: The syllable "TA" within the word "mortal" links love with the silence of death. The Provençal poet Pierre Milon broke down excessive *amore* to *a! mor!*—ah, death!—in his "En amor trob pietat gran" (Carducci).

14. *eternally green boughs*: The laurel is an evergreen. Cf. Apollo in *Metamorphoses* I, 559 ff.: "Let the laurel / Adorn, henceforth, my hair, my lyre, my quiver: / Let Roman victors, in the long procession, / Wear laurel wreaths for triumph and ovation. / Beside Augustus' portals let the laurel / Guard and watch over the oak, and as my head / Is always youthful, let the laurel always / Be green and shining!"

6 SONNET

The first of many branchings in the *Canzoniere*, this sonnet tells of the scattering of his forces now that he has fallen in love. In the *Phaedrus* (246 sq., 253 c sq.), Plato described the human soul in pursuit of the beloved as a charioteer (reason) struggling to guide two winged horses—one black (the irrational appetite) and the other white (the spirit or will toward good). Here irrational desire has gained control of the soul.

2. *turned in flight*: Like Daphne she turns away from his loving glance and his desire follows. Reason, weighted down, strives to keep up.

3. *light and liberated*: A freed soul.

4. *my slow run for her*: His will, obedient to the rein of reason, strives to hold the more stable course.

6. *safe path*: The known, charted course.

8. *makes him restive*: Resisting the bridle and bit. The irrational appetite of Plato strives only to seize the beloved for his own.

9. *takes the reins himself*: His soul is taken hostage by desire.

10. *harness of his lordship*: She has possession of his soul's imagination while he remains strapped to the restraints of an ordinary physical human love.

11. *rides me to death*: To his ruin in pursuit of Laura.

13–14. *bitter fruit . . . afflicts / someone else's wounds*: Unrequited love keeps wounds ever fresh.

7 SONNET

The poet writes to a friend who shares his desire to restore poetry's former glory.

1. *Gluttony, sleep, pillows of idleness*: This language has been traced to Livy and his description of Hannibal's troops after the battle of Cannae.

3–4. *our nature* . . . : Words meant to sting the Italian in his pride.

5–6. *so spent is every good light*: The influence of the heavens to bend human nature toward the good has been exhausted.

8. *make water flow from Helicon*: Bring divine poetry back to life. The Helicon is a mountain in Boetia sacred to the Muses.

9. *laurel . . . myrtle*: Laurel was sacred to Apollo, myrtle to Mercury and Venus.

10. *Philosophy*: Pallas Minerva, guide to the highest level of poetry.

11. *making money*: Venal poets who mock those whose aims are higher.

8 SONNET

The poem accompanies a gift of small animals taken by trap and sent to an unidentified friend. Petrarch pretends to speak in the voice of the creatures. The trap is a snare which he reproduces here in his syntax, knotting up meaning so the reader must struggle to untangle it.

1. *Beneath those hills*: The region where Laura was born, the humble village of 4.12.

2. *lovely clothes*: Playing on the idea that the body of Laura clothes her soul in mortal life.

4. *the one*: The weeping and sleepless poet-hunter.

7. *without the fear of finding*: As the poet was unsuspecting when felled by Love's arrow in poem 2, so too the animals trusted in their safety.

10. *other life that was serene*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XV, 49.

12–14. *revenge is taken . . . / . . . by greater chains*: The creatures speak of the hunter's falling prey to another, the lady of line 3 who endangers his soul.

14. *near his end*: Literally, *a l'extremo*. Several critics have heard echoes of *Inferno* V (Paolo and Francesca) in these lines.

9 SONNET

Another occasional poem, perhaps accompanying a gift of truffles (and probably a group of poems) sent to a friend.

1. *when the planet*: When the sun returns to the constellation Taurus around the middle of April. Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* I, 218.

7. *hidden things*: Those which live or grow underground.

8. *pregnant with his earthly moisture*: The sun's. According to Plutarch, a night with a full moon (the lamp of the sun) impregnates the earth with moisture, promoting generation and fruitfulness.

9. *this fruit and the like*: Presumably the truffles that accompany the poem. "And the like" refers to the poems themselves, serving notice that hidden meanings may be deduced from them.

10. *a sun among all ladies*: Laura, from whose spirit he receives heaven's light.

13. *how she controls or turns*: He turns as she bids, like a plant toward the sun's warmth.

14. *springtime . . . will never come*: His love will never "decorate the world with fresh-made color" (l. 4). Turned around, this suggests that his poems, although undecorative, are fruit of a sort, worth digging for.

10 Sonnet

Addressed to Stefano Colonna the elder, father of Giacomo and Giovanni, this sonnet was written in 1330 during a sojourn near the Pyrenees, where Petrarch was guest of Giacomo, newly named bishop of Lombez.

1. *Glorious column upon whom there rests*: A play on the name of the powerful Colonna family, probably alluding to the conflict between the Colonnas and Pope Boniface VIII. "Column" is also a patristic term for pillar of the church.

2. *renown of Latium*: Of Rome.

3. *wrath of Jove*: Jove is a reference to the temporal ruler. Cf. 4.4.

buffeting rain: Rain and wind represent harsh political conditions.

6. *a fir, a beech, a pine tree stand*: The savage fir is symbolic of the common people, the beech of oracular or prophetic literature, and the pine, St. Peter's tree, of the Holy Roman Church—all columns of support.

10. *nightingale that in the shadows*: Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* IV, 511: "Qualis populea moerens Philomela sub umbra amissos queritur fetus . . . at illa flet noctem, ramoque sedens miserabile carmen integrat, et moestis late loca questibus implet."

12. *burdens every heart*: For the suffering of the people. The nightingale, Philomela, appears from time to time in the *Canzoniere*, her song a refrain.

thoughts of love: In this case, the "thoughts" (*amorosi pensieri*) are of spiritual love.

13. *cut short perfection*: By Colonna's not joining them, the potential good of the forces gathered in lines 6–8 is hindered from fulfilling itself.

11 Ballata

The *ballata antica*, popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was meant to be sung during dance. The six others in the collection are poems 14, 53, 59, 63, 149, and 324. This is a *ballata grande* because its refrain has four verses.

2. *that veil*: The veil is a complex symbol in Petrarch's verse. Theologically it represents the fallen form of nature, the body which will be swept away at the time of Revelation. It can refer to writing itself, a less pure version of the Idea language is meant to convey. In poem 52, a madrigal, Petrarch puts his own touch on the common image of the veil, using it as a sign of allegory that both reveals and conceals truth.

3. *discovered*: She knew instantly the nature of his feelings when she looked into his eyes.

5. *in secret*: Before he had announced his love to the world.

6. *kill my heart*: Death of the heart is synonymous with the consuming intensity of desire.

10. *loving gaze withdrew*: She found his love unworthy. Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* X, where Beatrice denies Dante her greeting.

12. *the veil that rules me*: A power more temporal than eternal.

13. *in warmth or cooler weather*: Cf. "in sun or shade" in line 1.

14. *covers the sweet light*: Her truest beauty is hidden as are his thoughts of love in line 5.

12 Sonnet

He daydreams about old age when she will no longer be resistant to the idea of his love, when his youthful passion will be spent.

1–2. *anguish . . . struggles*: The suffering caused by unconsummated love.

4. *dimmed by the force*: Laura's power to arouse his desire will give way to Nature's power to take it away.

6. *garlands and green clothes*: Like Persephone, a maiden in the spring of her life.

7. *face pale*: Giving way to compassion. Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* XXXVI.

in all my misfortunes: Since the sweet pity in her face clouded over.

9. *make me bold*: After all fear of arousal is gone.

11. *the years, the days*: He anticipates. Cf. 343.11.

12. *should time work against my sweet desires*: Should one or the other die prematurely.

13 Sonnet

The rhyme scheme of this sonnet appears only twice more, in poems 94 and 326.

3. *as much as each*: The singularity of Laura is shown to be mathematical perfection by this conceit. She is the sum of womanhood, the highest good of line 10. Cf. the rendering of Beatrice in Dante, *Vita nuova* XXVI.

4. *the more the wish I love*: The more he desires to reach her perfection.

5. *I bless*: A benediction of his first encounter. For other expressions of the blessedness of this hour, see poems 61, 85, 211, 284, and 336.

8. *that you were found worthy*: That the gods blessed him with the sight of her.

10. *highest good*: The way to God.

12. *all joyous honesty*: Free of imperfection. The word *leggiadria* is one that Petrarch develops over the course of the *Canzoniere*. A perfect harmony of noble characteristics, its emergent quality is that of grace.

14. *fly high*: With confidence and pride in his abilities.

14 Ballata

He prepares for a journey which may challenge him grievously.

1. *weary eyes*: From weeping and studying her face.

2. *killed your sight*: By absorbing them completely. Petrarch uses *morire* (to die) transitively.

3. *careful*: Rely on what they already know of her virtue and beauty.

4. *Love defies you now*: Calls him into battle with himself.

6. *loving path*: Virtue.

8–10. *but your light can be hidden . . .*: Lesser beauties may obstruct the vision of his imperfect susceptible eyes.

11. *tearful hours*: Of parting.

14. *brief solace*: By fixing her face in his memory at the last moment.

15 SONNET

He begins his journey buoyed by optimism but slowed to a standstill by fear of separation and travail.

3. *air*: The word *aere*, distinct from *l'aura*, is used by Bernard de Ventadorn in a similar poem. The very air Laura breathes spurs him on.

5. *Then thinking*: Although his thoughts want to stay behind.

7. *and pale*: Fear of the journey causes his fire to wane.

8. *at the ground, my eyes in tears*: Irresolute, he waters the earth with his tears.

9–10. *a doubt / assails me*: The enjambment here brings *un dubbio* (a doubt) to the beginning of the line with sudden force.

10. *all these parts*: Of his divided being, that is, the vital spirits and body that journey forward, and the mind or soul that would remain with Laura.

12–14. *Love answers me . . .*: His love will bind together what doubt would split asunder.

16 SONNET

The poet makes a comparison between the lover and an old pilgrim traveling to the holy city of Rome.

3. *bewildered*: Fearing for the old man's safety.

5–8. *from there . . .*: The sequence of response is similar to lines 1–4 of the preceding sonnet. Good will buoys him, but the body lags behind.

wearied by the road: The effect of a long life's journey.

10. *the likeness of the One*: The impression of Christ's face on the burial cloth, the Veronica, preserved in the basilica of St. Peter. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXI, 103–108.

12–14. *Just so . . .*: He seeks in others a semblance of the ideal which is Laura. Their beauty compares to hers as the cloth that covered Christ resembles his true desirable form. The poet Foscolo thought this sonnet skirts on blasphemy.

17 SONNET

Laura has disdained him.

3. *my eyes turn*: When he should chance to look at her.

4. *I am divided*: Because all his thoughts are about her.

5. *sweet and soothing smile*: Now withdrawn from him.

6–8. *does calm the ardor . . .* : Like the sun, her smile fills him with sweet warmth, tempering his emotions.

7. *burning martyrdom*: Petrarch uses "martyrdom" in the Greek sense of testimony, i.e., breaking the silence with his poetry.

9. *turn cold*: Like the earth without its sun, turning in rotation.

11. *turning their gentle motion*: *Torcere* has the primary meaning of twist or deviate from the normal path, making it seem like a contradiction to "gentle motion."

12. *Let loose*: The amorous keys, Laura's eyes, have double power to lock and unlock.

14. *deep in thought*: His soul is able to transcend his martyred heart through meditation.

18 SONNET

Divided from the once-experienced source of light, he follows a blind course. This sonnet is unique for its rhyme scheme which repeats the seminal words *parte* and *luce* in the quatrains and *morte*, *desio*, and *sole* in the tercets. The rhymes are equivocal since their meanings vary.

1. *in the direction*: Drawn toward that place and moment when he first saw her.

2. *my lady's sweet face shines*: The light of her face had the double power of burning and clarifying. The term "Madonna" is a lover's endearment.

3. *lingering light*: The permanent impression on his heart made by her eyes, awakening his desire.

5. *breaks to pieces*: Love's assault wounded him where his strength was concentrated, dividing him from himself.

10. *I flee*: One of the paradoxes of Petrarch's verse is this fleeing from that part of himself that both ennobles and consumes him.

12. *I go in silence*: His *amoroso pensiero* cannot flower into verse.
deadly words: Unspeakable thoughts that die aborning (Carducci).

19 SONNET

The love poet's predicament resembles the involuntary movement of the moth for the flame. The sonnet anticipates the sestina soon to follow; see poem 22.

1–2. *courageous / sight*: That of the eagle, for example, symbol of apotheosis, associated with great kings.

2. *the sun*: The eagle's ability to look directly into the sun was legendary.

3. *others . . . harmed*: Beasts of the night who shun light.

5. *and others*: The moth, for example.

6. *joy in fire*: Because of its promise of a greater peace. The image is apocalyptic.

8. *latter race*: *Schera* (*schiera*) is a term Petrarch uses again in 139.2 and 287.11. Cf. Dante's use of *schiera* in *Inferno* XV, 16, and *Purgatorio* XXIV, 64–69.

9. *to face . . . shield*: Corresponding to lines 1–4.

13. *my destiny*: He was marked for martyrdom by his encounter with Laura.

14. *what will burn me*: That is, "the other power" (l. 7), a consuming dark force behind the sunlight of her face.

20 SONNET

Wounded in their first encounter, he is daunted by the task of praising her high beauty.

1–2. *praised / your beauty*: This was the promised goal of poem 5. *Vergognando* already wounds his verse with its laxity.

3. *first time*: This moment held in the memory is the touchstone of the *Canzoniere.*

4. *as no one was*: A thousand others failed to ignite his love.

5–6. *not for my arms . . . polished by my file*: Hers is not a beauty to be exalted in the usual way. Cf. poem 9.

8. *turns to ice*: From fear and shame at its inadequacy.

9–11. *Now more than once . . .* : Each part of the appartus put into motion for the creation of verse worthy of the lady is enumerated and found wanting.

14. *were conquered*: From the first moment, love had the effect of scattering his creative forces, centered in the heart where reason could not help him.

21 SONNET

He devises a clever argument to show that his inability to praise her cannot be blamed entirely on him.

1. *my sweet warrior*: Laura is his Diana, the beloved enemy who has possession of his heart.

4. *to gaze so low*: So great is the discrepancy between the ideal she symbolizes and the reality of his being.

6. *fallacious hope*: Mirroring his own for Laura.

7. *spurn*: The lover spurns his wounded heart as he imagines she might spurn it.

9. *if I banish it*: Abandon hope of repossessing it, accepting her terms.

13. *grave guilt*: For the projection of his guilt onto Laura, see also poems 23, 82, 207, 216, 224, 236, and 240.

14. *loves you the more*: In loving her he desires to be filled with her worthiness, but if he must lose hope for reciprocated love, his own unworthiness will be the stronger force, thereby wounding her.

22 SESTINA

This is the first of the *Canzoniere*'s nine sestinas, a complex form used by Arnaut Daniel and Dante and one that Petrarch perfects in his final sestina, poem 332, by doubling it. The sestina is made up of six stanzas of six hendecasyllabic lines, concluding with a three-line *tornata* that repeats all of the rhymes of the poem. Each stanza uses six different words in end-rhyme position, repeated in a different end position in all six stanzas, in a sequence called *retrogradatio cruciformis*: abcdef/faebdc/cfdabe/ecbfad/deacfb/bdfeca. Each stanza repeats the end-word of the preceding stanza in the order of lines 6 1 5 2 4 3. The stringent requirements of the form have the effect of binding essential, potent elements together to compensate for a spiritual falling-short.

1–2. *For any animal*. . .: Cf. poem 19.

7–12. *And I*. . .: The poet who loves by day weeps by night in his verses.

8. *that shakes the shadows*: Dawn is the goddess Aurora performing her housewifely duties of clearing away the night.

10–11. *sun* . . . *stars*: The sun was her loving face, the flaming stars her eyes that disdained him.

14. *is cause of others' dawn*: The shadows over Europe force the way to dawn over the opposite hemisphere (*fanno alba*). In poem 27, these shadows portend a new Crusade.

15. *the cruel stars*: Laura's eyes can both give and take away life.

16. *sentient earth*: As God created Adam in his image, her eyes formed him at their first encounter.

17. *curse the first day I saw the sun*: Cf. Job 3:3, "Pereat dies in quanatus sum, et nox in qua dictum est: Conceptus est homo."

18. *raised in the wood*: As one who is bewildered by sudden light when emerging from darkness.

20. *so cruel a beast*: The fierce and proud warrior maiden, object of his desire.

24. *firm desire comes down from the stars*: His faith binds together cruel eyes, cruel beast, and the body of this earth in his creative mind. Cf. Arnaut Daniel, "Lo ferm voler qu'el cor m'intra."

25–28. *shining stars* . . . *amorous wood* . . . *pity*: He makes a triad of these images also. The amorous wood was a region of Virgil's Underworld assigned to those who die for love (*Aeneid* VI, 442 ff.).

28. *for one day*: Cf. Job 14:13, where Job imagines God's granting him a rest from His constant gaze in one day's descent into Sheol, the Hebrew underworld. Petrarch's wish for a night of sexual love with her is repeated in two other sestinas, 237.35 and 332.73, and in canzone 73.72 with more spiritual intent. Cf. also 78.14.

29–30. *can restore many years* . . . *from the setting*: Cf. line 14, "our own dark is cause of others' dawn."

33. *to never see the dawn*: Because Petrarch seems to be speaking of a state between death (*si parte il sole*) and resurrection (*l'alba*), he may be inviting judgment, wishing to be recognized as the fallible man he is rather than aspiring to saintliness. Cf. Job 9:32–35.

34. *and she not be transformed*: As Daphne was changed into the laurel.

37. *But I'll be under earth*: He will not live to see his vision realized.

in a dry wood: Leopardi understood this to be a coffin, but here "wood" is *selva*, a forest, and it is "dry" because it yields a meager harvest. Figuratively *selva* means a multitude of thoughts, confusion.

38. *tiny stars*: Remote and weakened by distance.

This first canzone, half of which appeared in the First Reference Collection (1336–1338), may have been composed as early as 1330 (Wilkins says 1333 or 1334), but it did not receive its final form until 10 November 1356, when Petrarch made a notation on the working manuscript, Vat. Lat. 3196, that "after many, many years" he was transcribing it into finished form. In 1350, during a three-day period of work on the poem, he had reshaped it to give it a final touch. In 1351, in the early hours of Thursday, 28 April, he made the notation *fine* at the end of it. Yet on 4 November 1356, he was still retouching his "trifle" (*nugarum*); and a few days later, after further corrections, he made his final inscriptions, next to verse 156. It is evident that the canzone was no trifle in Petrarch's mind, since he labored so long and hard over it; indeed, in canzone 70, this "portrait" of his young age numbers among the Provençal and Italian love poems he evokes to dedicate his work to a strange new style.

The episodes described in this poem, amounting to six metamorphoses based on the Ovidian model, may be chronologically arranged and are autobiographical in nature. Or the metamorphoses may describe modes of emotional experience or shifting cognitive states arranged in a continuum giving the appearance of being progressive but always leading back to the primal moment or epiphany that is the subject of all the *Canzoniere*.

1. *In the sweet season*: Adolescence.

3. *grew up against me*: A sexual passion hostile to the preservation of self.

4. *can unripen*: Expressing his pain in verse may sweeten it.

6. *in my home*: In his heart and soul.

7. *how this offended him*: Compare the offenses of poem 2.

12. *a thousand pens*: Pens of his own that have been used up telling of his pain.

13. *every valley*: Wherever love reigns in inhabited regions.

14. *painful way of life*: His martyrdom.

17. *that thought*: The loving thought (*amoroso pensiero*) of 10.12. The ambiguity of this thought lies in its capacity for transormation, demonstrated by the six metamorphoses.

20. *I merely the shell*: The body being the mere dress of the soul. According to Waller (p. 93) *scorza* means the narrating poet.

21. *I tell you*: The open declaration is a rhetorical device, used by St. Augustine, Dante, and others, derived from the biblical psalms.

first thrust: This "first assault" is believed to refer either to the shock of puberty or to the kind of experience Dante described as taking place in his ninth year, growing into a real adolescent passion that was suppressed. "Frozen thoughts" and "adamantine toughness" (ll. 24–25) are fear and grief engendered by this early awakening of desire.

23. *giving up my youthful looks*: Petrarch had reached his twenty-third year (1327) when he first saw Laura, the end to the age of innocence.

29. *appeared miraculously*: The effects of love in others were merely surprising to him, so well defended was he against it. Cf. poem 2.

30. *Oh, what am I? What was I?*: A pained exclamation occurs in each stanza where a metamorphosis is about to take place.

31. *The end lauds life*: Just as the day can be judged or praised only in the evening, so life can be seen as good or bad, happy or unhappy, only in conclusion. The line echoes Ovid (*Heroides* II, 85), "Exitus acta probat."

34. *beyond the clothes I wore*: Had not penetrated to his heart.

38. *what I am*: A state of being in the present that answers the first of the questions of line 30, "what am I?"

39. *from living man*: The first transformation draws on the legend of Apollo and Daphne in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (I, 550).

to green laurel: The image of the tree and its branches symbolizes the power of poetic language to restrain as well as glorify the human spirit. "What was I?" (l. 30) speaks of the time of freedom (l. 5), before recognition of this power struck him with full force.

41. *The way I felt*: He will tell also of this, as in line 21 he declared, "I tell you . . . that."

44. *hoped to make into my crown*: The line is reminiscent of *Inferno* XVI, 106–108, in which Dante speaks of the cord he hoped to use as defense against the leopard. In the *Inferno*, Virgil drops into the pit the cord binding the Pilgrim's waist, attracting Geryon, whose transport permits a release from the bounds of conventional language into new realms. Petrarch's youthful hope was that the language he fashioned might bring him glory.

46. *every limb*: The metaphor flows backward from outward manifestations to the core of nature (and language).

48. *not of Peneus*: Daphne was transformed into a laurel tree by the compassionate goddess on the bank of the Peneus, to save her from the rape of Apollo.

a prouder river: Said to refer to the Rhône, the river flowing through Avignon, allegorically to a less simple, more prideful poetic environment.

50. *Nor do I feel*: The present tense, singling out emotion from event ("later on / when struck") appears whenever feelings are about to be transformed into myth.

51. *white feathers*: The second metamorphosis refers to the myth of Phaeton and Cygnus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II, 367). It dramatizes the psychological processes involved in hoping for his lady's favor, daring to reach for it, failing in the attempt, and ultimately losing courage to mount another effort. White is the color of fear, grief, and piety, now become the subject matter of his poetry.

57. *near and in the waters*: Whether he had lost his hope by immersing in the waters of life or standing back from them.

59. *that evil fall*: The fall of Phaeton, whose flight symbolized that of his hope.

60. *I took on its color*: He became celibate.

61. *the shores I loved*: Those frequented by Laura.

63. *with a strange voice*: Perhaps he means in Italian, among Frenchmen, a sound harsh and bitter to their ears, new and barbaric.

67. *What I felt then*: Virgil, Boethius, and Dante also speak of the memory that burns (literally "cooks").

68-86. *But much more . . .*: This episode, believed by most critics to be loosely recounting the myth of Battus and Mercury (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II, 685), may have other sources, such as the transformation of Atlas into a mountain when Perseus held up the head of Medusa. Cf. also St. Augustine's account in *Confessiones* III of his mother's vision of Christ, and Dante's dream in *Vita nuova* III, in which Beatrice feeds on his heart at the urging of a lordly figure.

71. *beyond . . . words*: Beyond human knowledge.

74. *"Say not a word"*: Cf. 5.7–8, and see 2 Cor. 12:4 and Mark 1:44.

75. *in other garb*: He recalls the first assault, when love of poetry was "green," by making this comparison with the second event, his meeting Laura.

77. *what the truth was*: Because she seemed receptive, and was alone, he revealed his passion to her.

79–80. *quickly turned me . . .*: The third metamorphosis, like his transformation to the swan, also describes fear, this more grievous and immediate. Whereas Cygnus was able to move, Battus suffers near paralysis, huddled like his cattle on the frozen tundra.

81. *so much anger*: Indignation at his failure to understand.

83. *Perhaps I am not what you think I am*: Rather than saying, "perhaps, sir, you misinterpret my kindness as acquiescence to your base desire," Laura may be chiding him for glorifying her falsely. Cf. *Inferno* XIX, 62.

84–86. *If she were . . .*: The "if" clause makes these lines ambiguous. In St. Augustine's account (see above, note 68–86), he is struck by his mother's faith but fails to understand it, instead continuing in his sinful ways for nine more years. Here, Petrarch's protagonist would rather return to his early period as a swan than endure his own thwarted passions.

88. *but myself*: This line begins a psychological process completed in line 100, when he blames her.

90. *my time is short*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XVI, 124–29.

92. *many things recorded in my mind*: He chooses to remain silent about certain events in his life. Instead, he will write only of that which brings about amazement and reverence.

95. *Death had now wrapped itself*: "Denied" by Laura, he enters a period of despair of being understood.

98. *my spoken voice*: Cf. poem 18, where the "deadly words" in line 12 are unspoken.

99. *pen and paper*: Cf. Job 19:23–24. Advised to suffer in silence by his friends, Job declared in 7:11 that he would not hold his peace, but would argue with God in defense of his life.

100. *I'm not mine*: He is hers. Cf. Job 9:35.

your fault: Laura, in possession of his heart and soul and having killed all hope in him, must take responsibility for his very death. This will be his defense against unintelligibility.

101. *by doing this*: By writing down the details of his love.

105. *sometimes inflame it*: His meekness will succeed in arousing her disdain, because boldness instead will be called for.

106. *I was wrapped in darkness*: Out of the sight of her eyes.

107. *with my prayers*: Cf. line 98, "my spoken voice had been denied me."

112. *fugitive ray*: A sun in decline. The passage recalls Job 16:18–22, where Job's prayers are unanswered and he yearns for an intercessor.

114. *whenever they decided*: Cf. Dante's *Vita nuova*, where the poet succumbs to self-pity (or takes the less arduous road to wisdom).

117. *turn to fountain*: The fourth metamorphosis, patterned on that of Byblis into a fountain (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IX, 660). Byblis had confessed in writing her forbidden

love for her brother Caunus, who then repudiated and abandoned her. Seeking him and not finding him anywhere she fell to the ground in despair, transformed by grief.

the beech tree: Petrarch alters Ovid's version, where the tree was the ilex or holly, coincidentally sacred to Christ. The beech commonly symbolizes literature.

118. *the wet road*: The path of tears.

119. *who ever heard*: The question begs an answer, for Petrarch was unique in investing in himself these transformations. Dante also claimed to break precedent in a sequence where metamorphosis was the peculiar characteristic of the thief. Cf. *Inferno* XXV, 97 ff.

120. *clear and well-known things*: This might compare accessible writings with those more mysterious and difficult, that is, those lines he pens to express his pain rather than to praise his lady. The distinction is Augustinian.

121. *The soul*: Laura's, created in the image of God.

124. *she never stops forgiving*: The nature of God is to forgive; therefore by praying to her likeness in God he comes to mercy.

127–131. *unlike herself. . .*: She has, instead, silenced him.

129. *be more feared*: That the prayer might also be an atonement for the sin.

134. *punishment was equal*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXX, 108.

135. *restored*: In a sense, she dried his tears and restored him to a state of grace.

136. *wise men count on nothing*: Echoing the pessimism of the Stoic.

138. *she turned to hardest stone*: This is the fifth metamorphosis, patterned after Echo's into flint in Ovid, *Metamorphses* II, 390. The nymph Echo loved Narcissus, who loved only the image of himself. Since Narcissus always started his own fire, and Echo's flint struck sparks that never ignited, they were of no use to each other.

140. *for Death and only her by name*: He is reduced to a disembodied voice endlessly repeating itself. Narcissus died by the pool, yearning for his reflection, Echo's mourning call repeating his dying syllables.

142. *deserted caves*: Where no one listened.

144. *I found freedom*: He found a new voice.

147–160. The sixth metamorphosis is based on the myth of Actaeon, Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 183. Acteon, while out hunting, came upon Diana in a grotto bathing in the waters of a spring. Angered by his seeing her naked, the goddess splashed water in his face, turning him into a stag hunted to death by his own dogs.

149. *cruel and lovely beast*: Cf. 22.19–22.

151. *hottest time of day*: When creatures seek the deepest woods and cooling waters.

152. *no other sight*: No other than the naked virgin goddess.

154. *to revenge herself or else to hide*: The language echoes Ovid and also the original experience of poem 2, in which Love's assault is graceful revenge, secretly delivered.

155. *splashed some water*: To erase the traces of what he saw.

156. *I'll tell the truth*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XVI, 124 ff. Dante and Petrarch use this mode of address to announce an event of extraordinary importance. Petrarch's final inscriptions on this canzone, written in 1356, appear next to this line.

a lie: In *Seniles* XII, 2, Petrarch wrote: "He who simply pretends cannot be classified by the word 'poet,' nor honored as a wise man, but can only be termed a liar," a belief similar to one expressed by Dante in *Vita nuova*, XXV.

157. *from my very image*: Of himself as a man. Ovid's Actaeon dies, torn apart by his own dogs while trying to shout, "I am he, I am Actaeon!"

159. *wandering deer*: Graves (p. 54) writes that the roebuck, forever fleeing through the woods, is a symbol in poetic literature of the keeper of the secret.

160. *I flee the rage*: The line has the effect of a freeze frame of the poet in flight.

my own hounds: The dogs have been variously identified as his thoughts, his desires, his contemporaries. In the Book of Job, "dogs" hound Job, first in the form of his friends and later as unworthy men who want to bring him down.

161–169. *Canzone . . .*: There is no agreement about the myths the *congedo* (leave-taking) refers to, other than that of Jove and Danaë (ll. 161–163), source of the image of the "golden cloud" described in Horace's *Odes* III, 16. Also mentioned are the myths of Jove and Aegina (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VI, 113); Jove and Semele (*Metamorphoses* III, 250); Jove and Ganymede (*Metamorphoses* X, 155), and Jove and Asteria (*Metamorphoses* VI, 106).

162. *precious rain*: Because the issue of this seed was the birth of Perseus, but also because it symbolizes a first cause for poetry.

flame lit by Love's glance: Probably the enamored Semele desiring to behold her divine lover.

165. *the bird that rises*: An eagle carried Ganymede to Olympus, and Aegina to the island where Jove sequestered her. Petrarch claims to be merely the medium of transport and not the object of transport. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* IX, 13–24.

168. *the first laurel*: That is, the first metamorphosis. Cf. lines 38–39.

169. *lesser pleasure*: Anything short of the one true figure.

24 SONNET

Written between 1330 and 1333 (in Petrarch's late twenties) to Stramazzo da Perugia, whose sonnet "La santa fama de la qual son prive" praised Petrarch's qualifications for poet laureate. This poem repeats Stramazzo's rhymes.

1. *illustrious branch*: That of the laurel, crown of emperors and poets. *Fronde* (branch) carries the sense of collective critical judgment.

1–2. *can control / the wrath of heaven*: The laurel was believed to be immune to lightning and as the symbol of poetry to be invulnerable to temporal power.

2. *when Jove thunders down*: When the temporal power threatens.

3–4. *had not refused . . . poetry*: Petrarch writes *poetando*, as in poem 10.8, to reflect with irony a prevailing opinion that poetry was a form of literature inferior to philosophy and theology.

5. *those goddesses*: Minerva and the Muses.

7. *that offense forces me far away*: On the subject of medieval coronation, Wilkins (1951, p. 65) writes: "The coronation of . . . Mussato (1315) was obviously a classicizing adaptation of the medieval academic graduation ceremony. . . . Its most obviously academic features are the preliminary examination, the use of a *Privilegium* or diploma, and the specifically academic awards of the diploma; the designation as Master; the giving of the 'legendi disputandi: atque interpretandi . . . liberam . . . potestatme'; and the conferring of the right to enjoy those 'privilegia immunitates honores et insignia' commonly enjoyed by professors of liberal and honorable arts."

8. *inventress*: Minerva. The allusion is to Virgil's *Georgics* I, 18, "oleacque Minerva inventrix," and identifies poetry with philosophy.

9. *Ethiopia's sands do not burn more*: An allusion to Rome's lost glory. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVI, 16–21.

11. *from losing something*: The laurel crown, later awarded to him in 1341.

12. *a more peaceful fountain*: One more clear and limpid, unobscured by dark passions such as his own.

25 SONNET

Written as early as 1330, this sonnet and the next are addressed to a poet friend recently returned to the bonds of love.

1–2. *Love at times*: Always himself a willing prisoner of love, he had wept for this friend struggling against it.

3. *strong and strange effects*: For these effects of love, see note to 29.13.

4. *released your soul*: Gave him a leave of absence.

7. *His mercy*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* II, 2.

9. *returning to the life of love*: To the contemplative life.

10. *on sweet desire*: Cf. line 3.

11. *hills or ditches*: Worldly snares.

12–13. *thorny . . . hard*: Rising out of the depths to reach the peaks is the test of the man.

26 SONNET

Because his friend has turned back to Love, he exults as if rescued from disaster.

1–2. *to land/a ship*: The ship is symbolic of the poet's craft and of the soul's journey.

2. *defeated by the waves*: Overwhelmed by circumstance, by the storms of daily life.

3. *piteously painted pale*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* IV, 19 ff. The color of fear is also that of piety. Cf. also Dante, *Vita nuova* XXIII.

7. *sword back in its sheath*: And peace restored.

8. *against my lord*: Love.

10. *fine weaver*: In medieval times, a complex idea for the author which defines aesthetic principles. The Italian word *testor* (weaver), from Latin *textor*, provides a connection with revelation literature.

love's poetry: Petrarch's *amorosi detti* echoes Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVI, 112, where Guinizelli speaks of Dante's *dolci detti*.

11. *honor the one who strayed before*: One whose experience has carried him into infernal regions from which he emerged victorious.

12–14. *more glory shines . . .* : The lines paraphrase Luke 15:7, "Quod ita gaudium erit in coelo super uno peccatore poenitentiam agente, quam super nonaginta novem iustis, qui non indigent poenitentia."

27 SONNET

In this sonnet, perhaps directed to Orso dell'Anguillara, Petrarch makes a call to arms in behalf of the Crusade against the Saracens (declared in 1334 by Philip VI of France, moral "successor" of Charlemagne), and for the return of Pope John XXII from Avignon to Rome.

1. *The successor of Charles*: Although Philip's father was Charles V, Petrarch hopes that he will follow in the footsteps of Charlemagne, champion of Rome against the "infidels."

3. *already takes up arms*: Philip joined the Crusade on 25 July 1332 and was subsequently named head of the expedition by Pope John. Hopes for his departure continued for six years, when the pope lost faith in him because of his continued war with England.

break the horns: In biblical literature, the horns signified pride and arrogance.

4. *of Babylon:* Ancient Baghdad; in this case, however, the reference is to Cairo, seat of the caliph.

and those who bear her name: All those followers of the Muslim religion.

5. *the vicar of Christ*: The pope.

6. *keys and cloak*: The duties of the pope.

6. *returns now to the nest*: To Rome from Avignon, to which the papacy transferred in 1309 under Pope Clement V.

8. *he'll see Bologna*: He refers, perhaps, to the French pope John's intention to take his first journey to Italy.

9. *Your lamb*: The noun is given in the feminine. Identification of her ranges from the force for peace among Italians (the Colonna family?), to Florence, to a specific Agnese, wife of Orso dell'Anguillara and sister of Giovanni and Giacomo Colonna.

10. *savage wolves*: Unidentified political forces hostile to the Church of Rome. They will be subdued not by predation but by grace and humility.

12. *console her then, the one who still is waiting*: Some say Bologna, others Florence (the lamb). The two events, the Crusade and the papal return, are awaited by all the principal players.

13. *lamenting her bridegroom*: The pope, as vicar of Christ.

14. *raise your sword*: In the canzone to follow he will exhort Giacomo Colonna to raise the weapon of eloquence on behalf of the Crusade. Cf. 26.7–8 for another metaphoric use of "sword."

28 CANZONE

Taking up the rallying cry of poem 27, Petrarch writes this appeal to Giacomo Colonna, bishop of Lombez, to lend his eloquence on behalf of the new Crusade proclaimed by the king of France in 1334.

3. *is clothed*: Not dominated by the flesh, Colonna wears it lightly and is beautified by it.

7. *your boat*: His life course is seen as a pilgrimage of the soul over a turbulent sea.

8. *already turned*: Colonna having taken high holy orders.

10. *western wind*: A new breath of religious spirit coming from France, inspired by the king's proclamation. See notes to poem 27.

12. *for ours and others' wrongs*: For the disobedience of Adam.

13. *free of ancient bonds*: Of original sin. He who redeems the Holy Sepulcher is himself redeemed, according to church doctrine.

14. *straightest course*: The narrow one, pursued with only one purpose in mind.

20. *by their merit*: Men's prayers perhaps not being sufficient, God has turned his gaze through divine compassion alone toward the land where His Son was born.

25. *new Charles*: Philip VI, "successor" to Charlemagne.

26. *that vengeance*: Against the Saracens for their occupation of the Holy Land.

brought us harm: Because of Christian tolerance for the fact that the Holy Sepulcher remains in the hands of dogs" (Tassoni), the church has been shamed.

28. *much loved bride*: The Holy Roman Church.

29. *that One*: Jesus Christ.

33. *the Christianest*: An honorific name for the king of France (*Sa Majesté très Crétienne*).

34. *cared about true worth*: Who followed in the advance footsteps of those most Christian standard-bearers.

36. *leave Spain empty*: The willing participation of all Spain's provinces is not doubted by Petrarch.

38. *from the Wain to Columns*: All the off-shore islands from Iceland to the Straits of Gibralter.

40. *most sacred Helicon*: From whatever place sprang the immortal poetry and philosophy of the sons of Apollo. Petrarch refers to the role of Greek in the development of religious ideas.

41. *language, arms, and customs*: However diverse the cultures. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* VIII, 723: "Quam variae linguis, habitu, tam vestis et armis" (Vellutello).

42–45. *charity spurs* . . . : Summing up the double force of this religious war, motivated by love of God and vengeance against persecution.

44–45. *ever / were subject*: According to a number of commentators, Petrarch refers to Minos's revenge against the Athenians for the death of his son and the Greeks' against Troy for the seizure of Helen.

47–48. *resting / . . . under ice and frozen snow*: The northern regions of Germany and Scandinavia. Unwarmed by the sun, the emotional natures of the inhabitants seem frozen in impassivity.

50. *enemies by nature*: Lacking fire and warmth, they are ungifted by love and intellect (Zingarelli). Such prejudices have their roots in the writings of Cicero, Virgil, and Lucan.

51. *dying does not hurt*: Because they have so little to live for, they do not feel the sting of death. Petrarch's violent opinions here derive also from Italy's long history of invasions from the north. Cf. poem 128.

52. *more devout than in the past*: If the warlike nature of the Teutons could be utilized toward Christian ends after a past history of warring only against them.

53. *Teutonic rage*: Cf. Lucan *Pharsalia* I, 255: "furor teutonicus," a kind of brute madness.

54. *Arabs, Turks . . . gods*: Muslims and therefore monotheists are lumped together with polytheists in this comparison of fierce armor-clad northerners ranked against burnoosed desert archers.

56. *sea of bloody waves*: The Red Sea. He includes also the armies of Egypt, Libya, and Morocco.

58. *naked, slow, and cowardly*: Arabs were commonly believed by Europeans to be effeminate, running from close battle encounters.

60. *trust the wind*: Avoiding the sword and depending on cavalry troops armed with bow and arrow. Cf. Lucan *Pharsalia* VIII, 381.

62. *that old yoke*: Petrarch appeals to his contemporaries to put aside narrow concerns of personal salvation and devote themselves to a greater cause.

63. *around our eyes*: Of Italians.

65. *immortal God Apollo*: God the poet, turning his compassionate eye to his living representative.

66. *display the power*: Reveal the *vertù* rather than veiling it. Petrarch speaks as one poet to another.

67. *praised writings*: Those written on sacred subjects.

69. *does not amaze*: If Colonna the Christian is immune to these pagan allegories, that is, that Amphion could move stones with the music of his lyre and Orpheus the pity of Hell and the trees of the forest with his song.

71. *clear voice*: His preaching at least can gain force from this insight into the responsive hearts of his countrymen.

73. *ancient mother*: Italy.

75. *cause so fair, so glorious*: So distinguished by a true chivalry.

76. *true treasure*: Scripture.

77. *the ancient and the modern*: Petrarch also praised Colonna's knowledge of history and literature in *Familiares* IV, 12.

78. *with your earthly weight*: Cf. line 3. Colonna's being desired by Heaven empowers him to experience such a transcendence.

79–80. *Mars' own son . . . Augustus*: From the reign of Romulus in pre-Christian times to the Golden Age.

81. *three times triumphing*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* VIII, 714: "Caesar, triplici invectus romana triumpho moenia, dis italis votum immortale sacrabat."

83. *in the defense of others*: Other peoples than Roman.

85. *pious and most grateful*: For basic Christian reasons rather than personal glory.

87. *glorious son*: Cf. line 79: "Mars' own son." Christ is the true father and son of Italy.

90. *Christ is part*: The line sums up an argument begun with the legends of Orpheus and Amphion that links the veil of allegory with the real presence of the Holy Spirit.

91–93. *rashness of a Xerxes*: Xerxes I of Persia, described here as an inflamed and savage lover because he breached Italian soil, bridging the Hellespont with ships and doing unnatural violence to the mother sea.

94. *and you will see*: History will repeat itself.

95. *tainted red*: The troops of Xerxes were routed in their flight from battle.

99. *vouchsafe your victory*: By this example and the ones to follow, Petrarch claims the favor of God for the cause of western peoples against the invading Muslims.

100. *Marathon*: Where the Persian king Darius I and his troops were defeated in 490 B.C. by ten thousand Athenians led by Miltiades.

101. *defended by the Lion*: By the heroic Spartan king Leonidas at Thermopylae, where 300 of his troops died impeding the crossing of the Persians under Xerxes in 480 B.C.

105. *so much good*: Contributing to the liberation of the Holy Land.

106. *the honored shore*: Rome and the Tiber, where Colonna was residing at the time.

109. *but only Love*: For Laura, a love that exiles him from "the honored shore."

noble light: Full of majesty and pomp, referring to Avignon.

110. *attracts me more*: Holds him in its spell, disqualifying him for the bold enterprise he seems to be turning over to Colonna, the better man.

111. *not strong enough*: According to the terms of the canzone the "natural" thing to do is join the Crusade. He, addicted to the vice of love, however, returns to his other war. In a sense he compares himself with the "lazy" Saracens, or at least with folk who merely dream and burn with a little flame for justice.

112. *don't separate*: Don't wander from the true subject matter, which carries it to Rome.

113. *not only beneath a veil*: *Bende*, a word that can mean blindfolds as well as the face-obscuring veils of nuns and noblewomen. When Love plays games he is known to wear a blindfold; but Petrarch perhaps recalls that justice does too.

114. *joy and tears*: Causing laughter as well as pain. These words leave a little tag-end, appearing to trivialize Petrarch's intent for the poems to follow, which is the serious one of continuing his war on a different front, in the new Babylon, Avignon.

29 CANZONE

This canzone makes a spectacular display of Provençal stanza construction, its form and first line resembling a poem by Arnaut Daniel, "Arvei vermeills, vertz, blans e blancs." The lines rhyme from stanza to stanza with the same internal rhymes appearing throughout in the fourth and sixth lines; the congedo echoes the last two lines of each stanza and ends on a septenary, which sets the stage for the sestina to follow. The canzone's use of rhyme words, especially internal rhyme, echoes through a number of the later poems, in particular the enigmatic 206.

1. *Green clothes*: Colors of the garments of noblewomen that range symbolically from the color of hope (green) to blood (red) to the color of Christ's passion and sacrifice (purple). Dante noted in the *Convivio* that this purple (*perso*) was "un colore misto di purpureo e di nero, ma vince il nero." Recent studies have identified *perso* as violet, also the color of the Virgin.

3. *hair of gold . . . twisted in blond braid*: Gold is added, as are black and white in line 23. Yellow is also added. The braid figure contrasts with the light and free locks of poem 90, for example, or with the locks of poem 30.

5. *and from the path of freedom*: From his defended state before he saw Laura, before his transfiguration.

13. *all mad desire*: Petrarch uses a word close in meaning to the raving he confesses to in poems 1 and 6, *delira*. Since Laura "strips" him of this desire, figuratively

undressing or unveiling his verse, he speaks of the complex effect of her qualities on his style.

all of my disdain: That he exhibited toward love when he was in his green age.

14. *makes sweet*: He is disarmed of bitterness by the pleasure of seeing her.

17. *will cure it*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXI, 6. The image appeared in Virgil, Ovid, and in the Provençal poetry of Bernard de Ventadorn. The sword of Achilles had the power to heal the one it wounded.

18. *rebel of mercy*: This endearment (*rubella di mercé*) derives from the Latin word for pale blushing.

19. *shall be revenged*: The vendetta of Love in 2.1 is recalled. Leopardi understood this to mean that she would ultimately turn in pity toward him.

20. *does not lock shut*: In poem 23, anger at his telling the humble truth resulted in her shutting him in stone so that he became mute.

21. *my lovely way to reach her*: Through the eyes or ears.

22. *The hour and the day*: He refers to Good Friday, 6 April 1327, the hour of terce. Cf. poem 3.1–4.

23. *to lovely black and whiteness*: Compassionate eyes, turned to him in a glance, into which he became absorbed after Love took possession of his heart.

24. *Love ran to take*: Cf. 2.3–4.

25. *first root . . . my life of pain*: The hour and the day continue to pierce him with the pain of love. Cf. Francesca da Rimini in Dante's *Inferno* V, 124–25: "But if your great desire is to learn / the very root of such a love as ours."

26. *our century marvels*: Admires without fully understanding a strange and new phenomenon.

31. *in my left side*: The side of the heart.

33. *for on the right place the just sentence falls*: God alone is the judge of her meaning.

34. *my soul sighs*: Because the soul resides in his wounded heart.

37–38. *one driven . . . / had plunged*: The reference is to Dido, who killed herself with the sword given her by Cupid when Aeneas rejected her. For antecedents to this allusion, see Carducci.

39. *to set me free*: To let him die for love as Dido did.

44. *of that fortunate womb*: He blesses the mother who bore Laura as well as the stars that ruled at the time. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* VIII, 45, "blessèd is she in whose womb you were conceived."

46–48. *as the laurel leaf*: Laura immortalized in poetry.

and lightning never strikes it: According to legend.

48–49. *unworthy / wind ever makes it bend*: Unworthy passion cannot subdue her.

51. *would vanquish*: Would exhaust the resources.

58. *a dearer pledge*: Cf. poem 341. The Latin *pignora* figuratively meant something you loved more than life that you gave up as security.

30 SESTINA

Several factors lend a unique quality to this first of the so-called anniversary poems of the *Canzoniere*. Written in 1334 to commemorate the seventh year of his love, it follows by a year Petrarch's acquiring a copy of St. Augustine's *Confessiones*, an event of great importance in his life. Petrarch was 30 when he wrote the poem. Christ's ministry began when he was 30. The books of the Bible number 30. In medieval numerology, the number represented the active life, and as the product of 6 times 5, it was a marriage (thus a potent and creative) number. In the Hebrew and Greek alphabets, the value of 30 was given to the letter *L*, whose name in Hebrew translates as the spit upon which the sacrificial lamb was roasted. Last but not least, *L* is the first letter of Laura's name.

1. *A young maiden*: The line echoes one of Dante's *rime petrose*, "Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d'ombra." Line 38 in Dante reads: "Sotto un bel verde la giovane donna." The imagery of this sestina closely resembles Dante's.

2. *I saw*: Referring always to his first encounter with Laura.

3. *unstruck by sun*: As if on the north flank of an alpine peak. The first stanza makes a comparison between this frozen mountain and the young woman under the laurel tree.

5. *I keep her in my eyes*: A vision or memory that perpetually sustains him.

7. *reach the shore*: Figuratively, the end of life, the plain of Revelation. Petrarch exploits the several literal and figurative meanings of the word *riva* (shore).

8. *when no green leaf*: He speaks of the impossible, since the green of the laurel is immortal. Cf. Rev. 7 and 8, in which the destruction of the tree, the drying of the eyes, and the promise of peace all figure.

10. *the fire freeze and blazing snow*: The quintessential Petrarchan conceit to which he returns again and again.

11–12. *upon my head . . . / . . . await the longed-for day*: If his hair is sparse, the Day of Judgment is imminent; if thick, his willingness to wait is prodigious.

15. *with dark or with white hair*: Petrarch makes frequent reference to his hair or "pelt" changing color. This suggests he is undergoing a period of celibacy. Cf. 23.60.

16. *I'll chase the shadow*: The shadow signifies nature as creation imitating ideal form.

20. *in the world's first years*: He compares Laura with Eve and all her descendants, finding her superior. Such praise is traditional and obligatory.

21. *that melt me*: The melting snow continues the alpine metaphor, an April thaw bringing floodlike waters to the plain. Cf. 23.117.

22. *tearful shore*: Spring draws lamentations from the lover.

24. *diamond branches and golden hair*: Diamonds convey strength, hardness, coldness; but they also produce prismatic effects, and along with gold hair, recall the apocalyptic vision of Ezekiel.

25–26. *I fear that I will change . . .*: The lines are ambivalent and imply that true repentance will come very late for him.

27. *my idol who is carved*: *Scolpito* (carved) has a root sense of "restored to wholeness."

28. *seven years*: The span of years since his first encounter with Laura.

35. *of someone born*: Posterity, which will heed him. Cf. poem 1.

36. *cared-for laurel*: One that is cultivated, pruned, and fertilized.

37. *All gold and topaz*: The Italian *l'auro* is a quasi-pun on the name Laura. Like the prismatic diamond the topaz was considered a most precious stone, noted for reflecting colors across the spectrum, as snow does, seen in the reflected light of the sun.

31 SONNET

In 1334 a drought and epidemic threatened the population of Avignon, and in this sonnet Laura has been ill. Petrarch's imagery recalls Dante's vision in *Paradiso*, taken from Plato's *Timaeus*, where souls are assigned in Heaven according to a degree of blessedness.

4. *heaven's most blessèd part*: The Empyrean, beyond the stars, where the most blessed dwell.

5–14. *Should she dwell . . .*: He imagines the soul of Laura hesitating among the stars or planets.

6. *would lose its color*: Would pale at her splendor, herself a sun.

7. *in admiration of her*: All their combined light will vie with that of the sun. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* I, 64–65 and 92–93.

9. *under the fourth nest*: Under the sun, in the region of Venus. Cf. poems 287 and 302, where Petrarch places Laura in Venus's domain.

10. *each of the three*: Venus, Mercury, and the Moon, those astral bodies closer to Earth upon which she would shed her light.

11. *she alone would have fame and renown*: Those qualities for which he vaunts her, honest love and wisdom, would surpass in the world's mind even these heavenly bodies.

12. *fifth sphere*: Mars, antithetical to Laura.

13. *should she fly up higher*: Completing the oblique journeys through the sixth and seventh planets, Jupiter and Saturn, and all the stars beyond, to the Empyrean.

32 SONNET

This interior dialogue between his soul and his thoughts detaches them from a frail mortal body, like Laura, threatened with illness.

1. *the last day*: Laura's illness brings him close to the possibility of his own premature death.

3. *running swift and light*: Cf. 6.2–4.

4. *my hope in him*: In time.

5. *We won't talk much of love*: His days of writing poetry are limited.

9. *falls that hope*: In earthly fulfillment.

12. *then clearly we shall see*: At the end of life he will be able to judge that life, as he indicated in 23.31.

33 SONNET

This is the first of many poems in which Laura appears to the poet in a dream.

1. *star of love*: Venus has risen, with a simultaneous clearing of the sky at dawn.

3–4. *was the other / . . . Juno with jealousy*: Referring to Ursa Major, the star into which Callisto was transformed by Jove after Juno turned her into a bear (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II, 405).

5. *the poor old woman*: An old housekeeper, going about her duties without regard for herself.

7. *piercing lovers*: Separating at dawn. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* VIII, 4, and *Paradiso* XXVIII, 45, for the image, "love that pierces."

9. *by now cut to the quick*: His hope nearly burnt out, like a candle stump.

10–11. *not by the usual way*: Not by his eyes but in a dream. He cried himself to sleep.

12. *How changed*: From the severity of her illness.

14. *not denied you yet*: "Do not judge yourself prematurely."

34 SONNET

According to Wilkins, this sonnet was the initial poem of the first collection Petrarch made of his verse in 1342; the collection contained a number of sonnets and half of poem 23, a canzone. Probably written early (with certainty before 1337), the poem was transcribed at the later date with these words written above it: "ceptù trascribi et incep. ab hoc loco, 1342, Aug. 21, hora 6." Its invocational qualities place it in the tradition of classical dedications to the sun god.

1. *if the lovely wish still lives*: The yearning of Apollo for Daphne in Ovid's myth (*Metamorphoses* I, 452).

2. *Thessalian wave*: The waters of the Peneus, where Daphne was transformed into the laurel tree.

5. *lazy frost*: Apollo's rays have been too weak to burn away the cold that lies upon the land. The image recalls poem 7 and "gluttony, sleep, pillows of idleness." The connection between frost, gluttony, and idleness is made by Dante (*Inferno* XXIV, 1–15 and 46–51) and laments a poor climate for great poetry.

6. *conceal your face*: The sun's rays are covered by clouds.

7. *honored, sacred leaf*: Poetry, the *lauro*, is threatened now by loss of inspiration.

8. *was snared*: As a bird is caught, or Daphne herself, as a consequence of possessive desire. The metaphor appears also in 83.6, 99.8, 189.3, 195.3.

10. *your bitter life*: His love for Daphne unrequited.

11. *make clear*: Apollo may return poetry to its former healthy state in his capacity as healer. "Impression" has the sense of "wounds."

14. *her arms casting their shade*: As a reincarnation of Minerva, goddess of wisdom.

35 SONNET

This sonnet is considered a high point of the early verse. It seems a profound departure from poem 34.

1. *I measure out*: Reproduced in the cadence of these lines.

2. *with slow, late steps*: Slow to repent.

4. *left within the sand*: Fleeing to a completely undiscovered place or time.

5. *I find no other shield*: He knows his burning love is visible in his bearing, as Dante did in *Vita nuova* VII.

7–8. *all bereft of joy*: There is a suggestion here of ambivalence. How he appears may reveal and conceal at the same time.

12–13. *a path / too harsh*: Words that echo Dante, *Inferno* I, 5.

14. *to speak to me*: Sapegno refers to this "whispered confession" of his slavery to Love as a morbid condition. Or this loving whisper may belie his bearing "bereft of joy" in line 7 with its note of suppressed exultation.

36 SONNET

He has been so ill his body seems more dead than alive. The tone of the sonnet suggests that he writes to a friend to let him know he survived.

4. *loathsome limbs*: Racked with illness, either spiritual or physical.

5–6. *a passage / from grief to grief*: From misery to eternal punishment.

7. *still closed to me*: To his passing from life to death.

8. *half cross over*: Wishing that he might die. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXIV, 25: "I did not die—I was not living either!"

9. *cord*: Of Love, which would deliver the coup de grace.

11. *stained with others' blood*: Of other lovers.

12. *I beg Love*: The unorthodoxy of this prayer to Love has been noted.

13. *of her own color*: The paleness of death.

14. *who forgets*: Death failed to take him.

37 CANZONE

Because Petrarch noted next to poem 38 that it was written during his voyage to Rome in 1337, when he was absent from Avignon for several months, it has been assumed that the separation he speaks of here resulted from that trip. The changing length of line in this canzone imitates the action, like the rapid rotating of a spindle and stretching of thread.

3. *if help does not come*: Some healing force.

8. *until now*: Since first seeing her, amorous hope has been all that sustained him. Cf. 34.9.

18. *terminate the journey*: Referring to the movement of Phoebus's chariot across the sky.

20. *how I race to death*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXXIII, 54: "of Life that is merely a race to Death." See also St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIII, 10.

24. *long and coiling path*: The spiraling path of the zodiac which the sun follows.

30. *without power*: The line has sagged, the bowstring is no longer taut. "To fly with my desire" refers to the flight of the spirit toward blessedness (cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XI, 38).

35. *the keys*: To paraphrase Castelvetro: "To think of her eyes is to open myself to joy."

40. *having seen them*: He may have seen her only once with that loving expression that unlocked his soul.

45. *make all of my darkness*: Cf. Isa. 58:10, "Et tenebrae tuae erunt sicut meridies."

46. *remembering may consume me more*: In his present hell he would know what he has lost.

49–50. *can renew / that ardent wish*: In 23.4 he sang so that his pain might be made less bitter. Here he seeks renewal of strength in an inner dialogue with his wretchedness.

56. *Why not choose*: He could, instead of freshening his pain by speaking of it, become mute, with possibly more grievous effects.

62. *savage sweetness*: Cf. 23.149. A sharp passionate flooding of memory results from these words.

69. *thrives on weeping*: The nourishment that he derives from his pain is well known to those who find solace in Provençal love poetry. Bernard de Ventadorn sang of it. Francesca lamented it, for all eternity. Zingarelli comments that Petrarchism is founded on this famous line, largely misunderstood.

77–78. *I often run and hide / therein*: In the heart, the space within where he converses with his soul (*ragionar*).

80. *they were my guides*: The eyes were the threshold and the door through which love entered his heart. Cf. 3.11.

81–89. *The golden hair* . . .: He turns to the praise of Laura.

89. *are gone now*: *Mi son tolte*, literally, "taken from me."

92. *the graciousness of her angelic greeting*: Petrarch speaks for the first time here of her resemblance to an angel.

93. *wake up my heart*: The effect of the greeting was to awaken in him a force or power (*vertute*) greater than all pain or pleasure.

97. *with still greater delight*: With a parenthesis of teasing self-mockery, he returns to calling up Laura's image, this time to her more purely physical beauties.

98–99. *white and slender*: The Provençal poet Arnaud de Mareuil is cited by Zingarelli as a source for these lines. Cf. also Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 498, for a reference to Daphne.

104. *wild and rocky places*: The natural barriers between them, but also, in the figurative sense, his current life of alienation from her.

109. *and falling reaffirms*: Sense determines here the sound and the length of line, as if wings were feebly rising and falling from lack of strength. He uses the same device in poem 365.

112. *make my home*: *Albergo* (home) is an enigmatic term that implies source, rest, and renewal—a link between temporal and eternal.

113. *that sweet place*: He directs his song to the place where Laura dwells, made sweet by her presence.

115. *I know*: The words echo Dante, *Inferno* XIII, 25: "I think perhaps he thought I might be thinking," suggesting double distance from the truth.

116. *she will offer you her lovely hand*: She does so in her merciful aspect, from which he is so distant.

118. *do not touch it*: Do not show your hand. Cf. 208.12–14.

119. *soon as possible*: "As soon as I am able," that is, when the strength of his wings is sufficient to lift his spirit.

120. *as naked soul*: Cf. lines 105–110. He fears he will not live to see her again in the flesh, although thoughts of reaching her with his words have buoyed his soul.

38 Sonnet

This sonnet addressed to his friend Orso dell'Anguillara was also written when he journeyed to Rome in 1337. He is said to have lodged for a time in Capranica, in the hills outside the city. The sonnet is distinctive because of its repetition of the words *né* (neither) and *o* (or), and its artful use of *Q*-words that trace his progress over the obstacles separating him from her.

2. *where every stream*: The Mediterranean into which so many rivers merge. Cf. 148.1.

3. *nor shadow of a wall*: Wall, hill, and branch, like the maternal sea, are symbols of the workings of time.

6. *hinders human sight*: Separates him from his goal.

7. *more than a veil*: The created form of Laura.

8. *Now weep*: Speak in lamentations.

9. *That downward glance*: Laura's eyes disdaining him.

10. *smothers*: The syntax is equivocal: either joy smothers or her downward glance smothers, illustrating the sense of "either-or."

12. *complain as well of a white hand*: Laura's hand that threatens or denies him.

14. *like a reef*: A hidden obstacle preventing him from reaching harbor.

39 Sonnet

The sonnet apologizes (perhaps to Giovanni Colonna) for a late return to Avignon.

1. *that attack*: Memory of her glance.

3. *flees the rod*: Her eyes chastised him. The terms of the sonnet recall the schoolroom—she the teacher, he the recalcitrant child.

4. *my first leap*: From the heat of her disapproval. *Salto* (leap) implies he had been skipping school.

8. *cold stone*: Mute with shame and humiliation.

9. *return so late*: No longer in a timely fashion, as if he had been absent for an important event (Zingarelli).

14. *were no small pledge*: The encouragement that he receives from this friend subdues his fear of returning to the eyes he fled.

40 Sonnet

A tapestry undertaken by the poet-weaver has been interrupted for lack of essential materials. Written between 1337 and 1341, this sonnet may have been addressed to Giacomo Colonna in Rome, upon whose generosity Petrarch depended. Mixing several metaphors in an exuberant style, it plays on the idea of doubling.

1. *If Love*: Love and Death in consort appear in a series of recent poems.

2. *this new cloth*: He has begun a new work.

3. *from the thick glue*: The lime that lures the bird and catches it fast is a metaphor for the entanglements of everyday life.

4. *one truth with the other*: The truths of love coupled with those of death.

5. *so doubled*: A fabric so much stronger for being interwoven.

6. *modern style and ancient tongue*: Combining ancient Latin and vernacular Italian, perhaps, although he might be speaking of modern vernacular and ancient Italian with its cognates in French. A bit of Roman dialect appears in the sonnet.

7. *(and I dare say it, fearfully)*: Lest he cause his words to detonate.

8. *you'll hear the bang*: Slumbering Rome, so needy of reawakening, will know an explosion of fame.

11. *cherished father*: Variously identified as St. Augustine, Livy, Cicero, or Seneca. Petrarch was active in unearthing ancient works that had been known to scholars only in derivative form.

12–14. *why are your hands . . .*: The brash delivery of this question corresponds to the explosive sound of his verse. He asks why his patron is no longer so generous.

41 SONNET

This and the following two sonnets employ the same rhymes, reversed in order in poem 42 and restored to the order of this sonnet in poem 43. They date from the earliest period and were included in the first collection of 1342, along with poems 44–48.

1. *when from its proper dwelling place departs*: Laura is absent from Avignon.

3. *Vulcan pants and sweats*: The god of fire whose art was ingenious but utilitarian. He labors here, mobilizing for battle. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XIV, 52 ff., and Virgil, *Aeneid* VIII, 414–25.

5–6. *who now thunders . . .*: Caesar is associated with the month of July, Janus with January.

7. *the earth weeps*: All the people suffer.

7–8. *the sun stays far away*: Apollo (Phoebus) is languishing in exile.

9. *Mars and Saturn*: Malign stars, ascendant in winter and associated with struggle and melancholy.

10. *armed Orion*: A southern constellation associated with winter storms and shipwreck.

11. *shrouds and rudders*: Spiritual (and political) aids to navigating through life. The language is Virgilian.

12. *Aeolus, angry*: Keeper of the winds. Neptune and Juno represent sea and air churned into tempests by those winds.

13. *how it feels*: The poet strains for comparisons with this allusion, more in the style of Vulcan than Apollo.

14. *sweet face awaited*: Laura's return is expected to restore peace and harmony.

42 SONNET

As foreseen, Laura returns, and skies and nature are restored to peace and a springlike loveliness. This sonnet uses the same rhymes but reverses the order of poems 41 and 43.

2. *beauties so unusual*: As if fresh and new when they reappear.

3. *in vain*: Love's return disarms Vulcan.

4. *very ancient smith of Sicily*: Vulcan was believed to have his forge inside Etna's volcano.

7. *his sister*: Latona (Leto), known in legend to be Earth.

9. *from the western shore*: Cf. 28.10, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 60. The west wind, a Zephyr, is optimal for setting sail to the east, perhaps on the crusade Petrarch envisions in poem 28.

12. *malignant planets*: Mars and Saturn, spoken of in poem 41. The season has turned.

13. *of her loving face*: By her sunlike qualities.

43 SONNET

This completes a cycle of three sonnets all using the same rhymes.

1. *Latona's son*: Apollo, god of poetry and rejected suitor of Daphne.

1–2. *nine / times*: The number of the Muses, and also Dante's sacred number. Cf. *Vita nuova* II.

2. *lofty balcony*: A prominence above human life but connected with it. Cf. 325.42.

4. *of someone else*: Of another love poet.

6. *where she lived*: Where she might have taken refuge (*albergasse*).

7. *gone mad with grief*: He raved and wept in despair of ever seeing her restored to life.

8. *he greatly treasured*: The art of ancient poetry.

9. *fixed off by himself*: In exile. Cf. poem 41.

10. *the face return*: The reappearance of Laura. Cf. poem 42.

12. *changed by his compassion*: Apollo became a different god as a consequence of his love for Daphne, returning from exile as a prophet, poet, and father of healers.

14. *retained its previous state*: Nothing has changed. The world still awaits the reappearance of this new and strange star.

44 SONNET

He turns to history and Scripture for dubious examples of pity to hold up as a mirror to his lady's anger and disdain.

1. *The man in Thessaly*: Julius Caesar. After the war against Pompey (Caesar's rival and son-in-law), Ptolemy put Pompey to death treacherously and presented his head to the victorious Caesar. Caesar was said to have wept, perhaps not with genuine feeling.

4. *recognized by his features*: The man's noble character being visible in his face. Pompey was much admired by Petrarch.

5. *the shepherd*: David. In 2 Sam. 18:33, David wept for his rebellious son Absalom, who died from blows delivered treacherously by David's own men.

7. *and changed expression*: In 2 Sam. 1, King David received news of the death of Saul, whom he succeeded as king. The biblical passage strongly suggests rivalry between the father and son.

8. *the wild mountain*: David cursed the hills of Gilboa where Saul died, making them arid.

9. *whom pity never can discolor*: He addresses Laura, whose face would never pale with compassion for his suffering.

12. *torn . . . to death*: His heart torn from his self. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXVII, 139–41.

45 SONNET

Laura's mirror has enamored her. The sonnet draws on the legends of Echo and Narcissus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* III, 344–510.

1. *My enemy*: Her mirror has become a rival for his affections.

3. *with beauties not its own*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 434: "The vision is only shadow, only reflection, lacking any substance."

4. *sweet and happy supernaturally*: Given to her by God.

5. *On his advice*: Zingarelli points out the antiquity of the phrase "on the advice of the mirror."

5–6. *expelled me / from the sweet place*: She has exiled him from his own heart, as Echo was by Narcissus.

7–8. *may not be / worthy*: Only she, being perfection itself, is worthy. Weak echoing is heard at the center of the poem in the form of an equivocal rhyme (*fora-fora*) expressing doubt.

9. *by strong nails*: By his martyrdom. Nails allude to the crucifixion of Christ. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* VIII, 136, where Dante's exile is predicted by a similar image.

10–11. *no mirror . . . you pleased yourself*: To find harshness and pride in her reflection should be, in the light of her perfection, a contradiction in terms.

13. *lead to the same end*: Death. Cf. notes to 23.138, 140.

14. *although no grass is fit*: Such a celestial beauty is fit not for earth but for heaven.

46 SONNET

Her eyes absorbed in self-love are murderous mirrors that leave Love speechless.

1. *The gold and pearls*: Laura's beauties.

2. *that winter should have weakened*: Her disappearance (poem 41) should have caused these beauties to wither.

3. *bitter, poisonous thorns*: *Stecchi* (thorns) have a figurative meaning of barrenness and deprivation.

4. *that I feel*: That he experiences whenever he thinks of her, like a self-applied pain.

6. *for seldom does*: The words are Seneca's, from his *Epistulae* XXX: "Nullum . . . dolorem esse longum, qui magnus est."

8. *loving yourself*: Cf. 45.1–4.

10. *he was speechless*: Love had no object, no sweet enemy to overwhelm with words.

11. *your desire was for you*: For her own proud beauty.

12. *such mirrors were constructed*: *Fabbricati* alludes perhaps to the work of Vulcan, an analogy for Petrarch's recent poems. Cf. poems 41–43.

13. *forgetfulness eternal*: Sunk in oblivion. The unspeakableness of war is a Virgilian theme.

14. *beginning of my death*: Synonymous with the muteness of Love.

47 Sonnet

Laura's eyes, the murderous mirrors in the preceding sonnet, are shielded, and once again he finds himself on the right path.

1–2. *already failing / those spirits*: From estrangement from Laura.

4. *for every mortal animal to fight*: To protect its vitals. By analogy he defends his heart.

5. *I freed desire*: He gave it free play, let it seek other objectives.
keep in check: The crisis has passed.

6. *path I almost lost*: The *quasi smarrita* suggests he skirted close to unworthy acts but pulled himself back in time.

8. *lead it somewhere else*: On the path to good.

11. *carefully avoid*: Because of the danger of being struck mute once again. Cf. 46.9–11.

14. *I'll die then*: Responding to lines 1–4. Unless he frees desire from time to time, his spirits will slowly die without the vitalizing effects of her glance.

48 Sonnet

His desire loses itself in the vastness of his love. This sonnet has been described as abstruse by Zingarelli and misleading by Carducci because it is sexually suggestive.

4. *contrasts will increase*: In opposition there can be a strengthening of forces, according to Heraclitus.

5. *our every thought*: Of any lover.

8. *strengthen desire less*: Why is his love not amplified, as fire is by fire and rain by rain?

9. *just as the Nile*: The archetypal river of the proud.

13. *something too immense*: A good so undefined, so boundless ("ne lo sfrenato obietto"). See 47.5 and note. Early commentators thought this line revealed a wantonness on the part of Laura.

49 SONNET

His tongue has not served him well in presenting his suit to his lady. The sonnet dates from the period of his Roman journey in 1337 (dated precisely 13 February), when he wrote poems 37 and 38.

5. *need of your assistance*: He needs the redeeming influence of a more beautiful style.
7. *still colder*: As if his poetry were a corpse growing cold.
8. *they are broken*: *Imperfecte*, as if he stutters.
spoken in a dream: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXXIII, 31: "It is my wish that you from now on free yourself from fear and shame, and cease to speak like someone in a dream."
11. *when my peace is present*: When the sweet thought comes to him.
12–13. *so quick . . . / my sighs*: So ready to emerge as the offensive poem, so tardy to emerge as the one of praise.
14. *Only my look*: Only in his eyes can he show the true state of his heart.

50 CANZONE

The second anniversary poem (the first being a sestina, poem 30), this canzone commemorates the tenth year of his martyrdom, bringing him to his thirty-third year. It is distinguished by its doubling of consonants and adverbial phrases, a dividing of stanzas into two, and its movement, similar to that of poem 37, of slowing and quickening according to the sense of the lines.

1. *the rapid heavens*: When the sun seems to sink more rapidly toward the horizon in the evening sky. Each stanza begins with the sunset, advancing into night.
3. *expectant race*: The people on the other side of the globe, at the antipodes (cf. 22.14).
6. *doubles her pace*: Eight doublings of consonants appear in these two lines. Approaching death slows her while love of God spurs her on.
12. *But, oh*: Each stanza divides at some point to make reference to himself, at lines 12, 25, 39, 46, and 63, moving from the end of the stanza to the beginning.
14. *eternal light begins to fade*: The light of the sun, but also of Laura, who is a sun for him.
15. *begin to flame*: As the sun reddens and seems to blaze just before sinking in the west.
17. *shadows / . . . cast deeper*: Shadow is cast over shadow by the alpine heights.
18. *avid workman*: He, too, has doubled his efforts to finish his labors before dark. The lines echo Virgil's *Georgics* I, 47, and I, 160.
22. *all full of meager food*: An illusion to the classical Golden Age, sung by Virgil (*Georgics* IV, 132), Ovid (*Metamorphoses* I, 103 and 106) and Boethius (*Consolatione Philosophiae* II, 5), when man lived in harmony with nature, feeding on acorns.
24. *the whole world sings*: Giving lip service to the simple life but in fact seeking one ever more complex.

28. *for all the turning*: The wheeling of the zodiac.

30. *are falling toward the nest*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* VII, 85. In fable the sun rested in the breast of the sea.

33. *grass and springs and beech's shade*: The language of this passage evokes the age of great pastoral poetry.

37. *he weaves out of green leaves*: This metaphor was used by Boccaccio in the archetypal sense of preparing the marriage bed (Carducci).

40. *wild beast*: Laura-Daphne.

44. *in some protected cove*: *Chiusa valle* echoes the name Vaucluse, Petarch's retreat near Avignon.

47–48. *Spain, / Granada . . . Pillars*: The western-most points of Africa and Spain, beyond which man was forbidden to go by the ancient gods.

55. *nearly ten years*: Since he first saw Laura, 6 April 1327.

56. *set me free*: To be freed from love is to die. Petrarch uses *indovinare* to suggest that one cannot, as Ulysses discovered in Dante's *Inferno*, know the nature of Death.

57. *relieve my pain*: Cf. 23.4.

58. *I see at evening*: The natural sun has disappeared from this stanza. Instead, only Laura's beautiful face will be recalled in line 65.

oxen coming home: Yoked oxen are a familiar image in classical poetry. Cf. Horace, *Odes* III, 6: "sol ubi montium Mutaret umbras et juga demeret Bobus fatigatis." St. Augustine used the term to mean evangelists in *De Doctrina* 2.10.15.

60–62. *why, then . . .*: These questions are rhetorical and recall the lamentations of Job, "favored" by God.

61. *heavy yoke*: The burden that he assumed as a love poet.

63. *what I did*: What he wrought.

66. *carve it*: Cf. poems 30 and 46, both for the sculpting of the idol and the mirroring of her beauties, recalled as a petrifaction.

67. *neither by coercion nor by art*: Neither by God's will nor by his own efforts.

69. *of one who*: Death.

70. *could she even then*: Her beauty may be immortal. This point of disagreement with theology raises a question in the *Canzoniere*—never definitively answered—of whether he can, in fact, ever completely renounce her.

73. *join my party*: The company of love poets.

74. *you will not show yourself*: His song makes no pretensions to praise her.

76. *from hill to hill*: In solitude and contemplation.

78. *living stone*: Laura. Cf. 30.31–36.

51 Sonnet

This sonnet stands alone between a canzone and a sequence of madrigal, canzone, madrigal, and provides a summing up of the first of five possible subdivisions in the *Canzoniere* created by four single sonnets. The others are 120, 238, and 269.

1–4. *Had it come . . .*: Had he been favored by that star or sun whose light is remembered even at a distance, he might have undergone the metamorphosis Daphne did in Thessaly when she turned into a laurel.

5. *change into her form*: Attain to her beauty and perfection.

8. *chiseled in care*: Not beautiful, not perfect, but lined with thought, as his syntax demonstrates.

10. *crystal*: *Diaspro*, red crystalline quartz spotted with deeper red, yellow, and brown. It is suggestive of shame, according to some commentators, but to Leopardi it represented truth.

11. *prized by the foolish*: Valued for its baser qualities.

12. *I'd be free*: If his poetry were, in fact, a reflection of any one of these things alone, rather than a composite of all three.

13–14. *old, tired man*: The titan Atlas, holding up the world, had no greater weight than that of his triple burden. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, 653.

52 MADRIGAL

This is the first of the *Canzoniere*'s four madrigals (see also poems 54, 106, and 121), consisting of two tercets of the *terza rima* type, followed by a couplet, comparable to the conclusion of a canto in Dante. Sapegno noted its sensual form with its intertwining rhyme of the *terza rima* and the kiss of the couplet. Soft *g*-sounds predominate.

1. *pleased her lover*: Actaeon. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 138–252; see notes to 23.147–160.

2. *just by chance*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 141–43: "In the story / You will find Actaeon guiltless; put the blame / on luck, not crime: what crime is there in error?"

4. *simple mountain shepherdess*: Imagery appropriate to a madrigal, which was intended to be amorous and bucolic in setting.

5. *the pretty veil*: See note to 11.2.

7–8. *hot sunlight . . . / . . . chill of love*: As if his burning thoughts were plunged in chilly waters, tempering them.

53 CANZONE

According to Wilkins, this canzone dates from Petrarch's first residence in Vaucluse, between 1337 and February 1341. It may have been directed to Cola di Rienzo, the fiery Roman commoner who seized power in 1344 and for a time appeared to Petrarch to be the one man capable of resurrecting a fallen Rome, and by so doing, Italy itself. Some have speculated that the "noble spirit" was senator-elect Bosone da Gubbio, others that he was senator Stefano Colonna the younger.

1–3. *Noble spirit*: The spirit governs a man's energies and works—in this case "members" most virtuous. The terms of this canzone are drawn from Laura's model and transferred to the political figure.

4. *honored staff*: The scepter of command. Cf. Ezek. 19:14.

5. *erring people*: Those Romans who had lost sight of Rome's glory and her role as capital of the world.

11. *appear to feel her woes*: Italy has had no other recent spokesman.

14. *grab her by the hair*: In Ezek. 8:3, God reaches out with his hand and seizes the prophet by the forelock.

17. *by such weight*: Italy subjected to the oppression of tyrannical and warring lords.

26. *Mars' progeny*: The Romans, descendants of Romulus, son of Rhea Sylvia and Mars.

27. *to their own honor*: Should they aspire to goals appropriate to their heritage.

29. *the ancient walls*: Rome's walls, symbol of her glory, were being dismantled and carted away by an indifferent and greedy populace, along with columns and statues and other treasures.

33. *men . . . great fame*: The heroes of Roman history, whom he goes on to name.

35. *this one ruin*: Rome abandoned to gradual decay, not only buildings and monuments but religion and culture—"one ruin" all.

37. *Scipioni*: An ancient Roman family. One was Scipio Africanus, subject of Petrarch's unfinished epic poem in Latin.

O faithful Brutus: Brutus the first, renowned for his love of country.

39. *down there*: In the Underworld, the afterlife of pagans.

41. *Fabricius*: Famous for his incorruptibility, he brought down the Etruscans in Rome's name.

43. *if the heavens care*: The line echoes Virgil, *Aeneid* II, 536.

44. *citizen-souls*: The saints in Heaven, alluding to the celestial Jerusalem. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXXII, 101.

48. *closed the pathway*: Because of vandals and thieves, the churches and holy places were too dangerous to enter.

50. *den of thieves*: Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXII, 76.

54. *how diverse*: Estranged from good. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXIII, 151.

55. *without bells*: The bells were placed in the towers to praise and thank God; now they serve as a signal to attack.

59. *hate themselves*: Alluding to their profane lives. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XVI, 121; Lucan, *Pharsalia* II, 64; and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VIII, 549.

60. *friars*: Franciscans, Benedictines, or Dominicans. Their scattered numbers suggest they are a factor in the breakdown of culture.

65. *Hannibal feel pity*: Even Rome's most implacable enemy would feel a pity unfelt by the men currently in power.

67. *all aflame*: The fire of ambition and pride burning unrestrained in Rome.

71. *bears and wolves*: These names refer to the crests of Italian families whose willfulness causes such suffering as he describes. The Orsini are the bears; the wolves the counts of Tusculum; the lions the Savelli; the eagles the Annibaldi; the snakes the Caetani.

72–73. *great column . . .*: The Colonna family, not only friends and benefactors of Petrarch, but according to him almost standing alone in their defense of Rome against armed opposition. In 1333 the Orsini opposed the Colonnas at San Cesario and were overcome, therefore "harming themselves."

74. *that noble lady*: Rome.

76. *bad plants*: Ezekiel prophesied that parasitical plants will be destroyed by God.

77. *a thousand years*: Before the transfer of the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, when the Golden Age ended.

80. *you newcomers*: They who did not descend directly from the Romans. Even the Colonnas derived from the region of Bologna; the Orsini were from Spoleto. Their family pride, coming first, denies the Church.

82. *Be husband, be her father*: Rome, as the new Jerusalem, is daughter, wife, and mother. Cf. 366.47.

84. *the greater Father*: The pope. The papal seat was Avignon, not Rome.

85. *injurious fortune*: The daring virtuous man, seizing the day, defies the pitiless randomness of fortune.

88. *cleared the way*: Fortune had always seemed to him to reward evil and punish virtue until this man liberated himself from her hindrances, opening the way to grand enterprises.

93. *reach eternal fame*: For the first time the combination of circumstances is ideal for a new hero to arise.

94. *that monarchy most noble*: Rome as *caput mundi*.

98. *when she was old*: Perhaps an even greater heroic act would be to save the mother.

99. *Tarpeian Mount*: The Campidoglio, site of the Senate and the rock from which Titus Manlius hurled himself for love of liberty (Virgil, *Aeneid* VIII, 652).

102. *One who's not seen you yet*: The exiled citizen of Italy who has heard of him only by reputation.

54 MADRIGAL

This madrigal dramatizes the history of his love in another way.

1. *Love's colors*: Red and white.

2. *pilgrim soul*: As a fellow traveler on life's road but also, perhaps, as someone foreign—strange and new. Cf. poem 52, the madrigal of the mountain shepherdess.

4. *along green grass*: Cf. 23.1–2.

5. *loud voice*: Clear and authoritative. Cf. St. Augustine, *Confessiones* VIII, 12.

6. *in the woods*: Symbol of moral confusion.

7. *I sought shade*: Forgetfulness.

10. *around midday*: *Quasi* at midday is in contrast with Dante's unequivocal "Nel mezzo del cammin" (*Inferno* I, 1). In the next poem he sets off on a new path possibly as errant as the last.

55 BALLATA

This ballata introduces a new phase in his love—the possibility of a *secondo errore*.

1. *That fire*: Love for Laura.

2. *by the cold times*: Cf. the Vulcan series beginning with poem 41, but especially poem 46.

3. *renews . . . suffering*: A new desire to speak out is born.

5. *covered up a bit*: By the ashes of defeat. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII, 80: "Parva sub inducta latuit: Scintilla favilla."

7. *tears I scatter by the thousands*: All the words sent abroad telling of his pain.

8. *drip out of my heart*: *Si distille*. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXIII, 97.

9. *both the sparks and tinder*: "Sparks" are the memories of her eyes he holds there, "tinder" the noble love awakened by those sparks.

11–12. *What fire*: Cf. poem 48, where fire diluted fire and water, water. He confirms that he continues to burn in spite of the deaf ears turned to his pain.

14. *between two opposites*: Between fire and ice, desire and remorse, innocence and experience.

17. *her fair face*: Hope and despair are the opposites struggling in his heart.

56 SONNET

The rhyme scheme of this sonnet is the first to alternate *abab* in the quatrains. It gives form to the opposition between the lover's passionate hopes and his feared disappointment.

1. *counting all the hours*: Vainly numbering his days.

4. *to my pity*: *Mercé*, a merciful judgment.

5–8. *What shadow . . .*: Three proverbs are echoed in these lines, all foreshadowing bitter disappoinitment of his hopes for peace in a new age.

7. *what wild beast is roaring?*: What agent of destruction.

8. *Between the grain and hand*: Between sowing and reaping.
what wall exists?: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVII, 36.

10. *that Love*: Early commentators reconstructed a scenario for this poem that had Petrarch waiting with fear and joy beneath Laura's balcony while her jealous husband roared inside (Carducci).

13. *finally depart*: Come to judgment.

14. *consider himself blest*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 136–38: "But always, always, / A man must wait the final day, and no man / Should ever be called happy before burial."

57 SONNET

He waited and despaired, and when she appeared it was only for a moment.

4. *swifter than a tiger*: Cf. Lucan, *Pharsalia* V, 405; Statius *Thebais* IV, 315.

5–8. *the snow will fall . . .*: Proverbial expressions for unimaginable outcomes. Cf. Virgil, *Eclogues* I, 60, where he uses similar language to speak of the impossibility of forgetting Augustus Caesar.

9. *find in this*: In this world of "waiting and foresaking" (l. 3).

10. *find another way*: Love and Laura promised him mercy but will lead him instead back into war. Cf. 56.10–11.

11. *plotted wrongfully*: As he was enslaved by one and aroused by the other.

12. *when I taste sweet*: Corresponding to "good fortune" in line 1.

13. *through my scorn*: The pleasure is not worth the waiting and forsaking.

58 SONNET

This sonnet accompanied three little gifts sent to Agapito Colonna, according to a note on Vat. Lat. 3196. Agapito had recently suffered disappointment in love.

2. *rest upon one of these*: Perhaps a pillow. One of the remedies for love was thought to be repose and meditation.

4. *that cruel one*: Love.

5. *With the next one*: The second gift, perhaps a book.

block to the left: On the side of the heart.

8. *little time is left*: Reminiscent of Horace's "Ars longa, vita brevis."

9. *with the third one drink*: Perhaps a cup or glass.

the juice of herbs: An extract for his affliction.

12. *put me*: The poem itself.

where all pleasure is reserved: In the heart or memory. The poem begs to be remembered with pleasure (Durling).

13. *captain of the Styx*: Charon, who ferries souls into the Underworld.

59 BALLATA

Deprived of the sight of Laura, he intends to love her nonetheless, with a new emphasis on her golden hair.

3. *my fixed desire*: Cf. 22.24.

4. *hid the noose*: Referring to the conical shape of her golden tendrils. Later he speaks of the golden threads with which he has spun his cocoon.

6. *cold ice*: The effect of a distant star. The memory of Laura's cold glance, instead of stifling his ardor, increases it.

15. *though through a good death*: Cf. 5.7–8, 23.31, 140.14, and 207.65.

17. *from such a knot*: The knot and the noose are one—his tie to the "unexpected splendor" (l. 8) that memory of her calls up.

60 SONNET

The bitterness Petrarch now feels is put into the mouth of his successor in this harsh judgment of himself.

1. *the gracious tree that I loved hard*: The laurel. Petrarch speaks in the past tense of youthful, idealistic love born of intense study. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XI, 63.

4. *in all my troubles*: The plant grew strong by struggling against adversity.

6. *it turned*: The disdain of Laura—her sudden turning away from him—produced a corresponding change in his verse.

bitter wood: Pitiless, mirroring the maiden's unyieldingness. Cf. 22.37.

9–11. *What would he say . . .*: A younger poet might ask (as he does now) whether he had been hopelessly deceived by the predecessor's sweet words of love.

12–13. *nor Jove / grant it favor*: Nor grant it immunity from lightning.

13. *let the sun pour anger*: At midday, metaphorically the period of a man's life when cynicism may replace idealism.

61 Sonnet

As if to respond to the raveled nature of the preceding sonnet, this benedictory poem gathers up and blesses in a grand embrace all the contradictory elements of his love.

1. *blessèd be the day*: Echoing the beatitudes of the Gospel of Matthew has a number of precedents in Provençal poetry.

2. *the season and the time, the hour*: Spring, in the morning, at the first canonical hour, 6–9 A.M.

3. *the place*: Avignon.

5. *the first sweet agony*: More than his joy, he blesses his pain, which in its sweetness was unique and sudden.

7. *all the arrows*: Renewals of his wounds on other occasions.

9–10. *all of the poetry / I scattered*: Compare the title Petrarch gave the collection, *Rime sparse*. Blessing all his verse written in her name expresses joy in its variety.

14. *shared with no one else*: His thoughts at all times have been faithful to Laura.

62 Sonnet

Third among the anniversary poems, this sonnet commemorates the eleventh year of his love, Good Friday, 1338, with a prayer to God.

2. *spent in delirium*: Cf. 23.3.

5. *your light*: The illuminating light of grace.

6. *to deeds more beautiful*: He prays directly to God for guidance, whereas before he invoked Love, *la donna*, or Apollo.

7. *spread his nets in vain*: He has turned at midday, as he wrote in 54.10, thus escaping the snares of the adversary.

8. *may be disarmed*: *Scornare*, with a root meaning of "break the horns of," thus depriving Satan of his power.

10. *pitiless yoke*: His subjection to Love. Cf. 29.7 and 50.61.

11. *harshest to those*: Those most loyal to the pursuit of truth.

14. *crucified today*: Cf. poem 3. According to Salvini, Petrarch observed the Passion every year by taking only bread and water.

63 Ballata

As if to give evidence of the healing effects of his prayer, this ballata makes a fresh start.

1. *Turning your eyes*: Demonstrating her quality of majesty.

my strange color: The pallor of one wounded in the heart.

3. *you did so out of pity*: Cf. 23.121–135.

8. *I owe to them*: First the eyes, then the voice of Laura are the sources of his inspiration. Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* II and III.

9. *for, as the rod will to the lazy beast*: The nature of his falling in love was sudden and splendid. Now memory of Laura's greeting acts as a prod to his conscience.

10. *the heavy soul in me*: The soul is weighted down by the body. Cf. poems 6 and 33.

11. *you hold both keys*: She decides whether he experiences pain or joy, heaven or hell. Cf. 29.56, and Dante, *Inferno* XIII, 58.

14. *anything from you*: Even when she disdains him, he has been blessed by loving her.

64 SONNET

The intimacy he revealed in the preceding ballata becomes playful identification in this sonnet. He has created her, cruelty and all, just as she alone has inspired him.

The date of transcription on Vat. Lat. 3196, now completely illegible, at one time read 16 November 1337, according to Ubaldini.

4. *my pure and worthy prayers*: Cf. poems 61 and 62.

6–7. *that first laurel / grafts many branches*: Many styles, diverse traditions, creating new life out of old wood.

8. *this is just reason*: His being daunted by her would merit true disdain.

9. *a noble plant*: The laurel.

arid ground: In a breast devoid of love for her.

12. *since your destiny prohibits you*: Only he can know her and celebrate her, as a unique poet in a unique age.

14. *the place you stay*: In his heart and thoughts.

is not always so hateful: The line reminded Vellutello of the exiled Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto* II, 8, when he sent a portrait to Augustus and Livia: "Denique, quae mecum est et erit sine fine, cavet ne sit in inviso vestra figura loco."

65 SONNET

A slave to Love, he can only hope that his fire will exceed expectations when tested.

1. *badly prepared*: Cf. poems 2 and 3.

4. *sits upon its summit*: Has taken dominion over his thoughts.

5. *force of his file*: Wearing down his resistance.

6. *strength or worthiness*: An allusion to 2.5, "My strength was concentrated in my heart."

7. *hardened heart*: Cf. 2.7–8.

8. *when one thinks he's above it*: He esteemed himself above an earthly love.

10. *except to test*: His vital power is measured in terms of her response, much or little.
13. *now in moderation*: Hardly worthy of admiration. Cf. 170.14.

66 SESTINA

Written during his first residence in Vaucluse, perhaps in 1340, this sestina echoes in its imagery and design Dante's canzone "Io son venuto al punto de la rota." The state of the lover's heart and mind is like a valley among mountains about to be swept by a winter storm.

1–6. *The heavy air*: Winter settles in on mountains and valleys like a gravitational force.

2. *furious winds*: Concentrating their anger in barely forming precipitation.

8. *thoughts . . . in such a fog*: In poem 37 the distant fog blocked him from the sight of her. Here he is in the midst of it.

9. *sometimes rises*: Fog that rises from the land like a miasma. He may allude to intrigue in the papal court at Avignon.

10. *closed . . . against the loving winds*: Cf. 28.10.

11. *stagnating rivers*: The rivers running through the valley feed into the Rhône near Avignon, whose corruption Petrarch later attacks. Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* IV, 288, "effuso stagnantem flumine Nilum."

14. *warmth makes disappear*: The abrupt tone imitates the sudden arrival of spring following on the heels of a sirocco.

17. *the fury of the winds*: Spring must follow this tempest.

19. *no help for me*: Cf. 9.14.

24. *I'll see dried up*: Before she thaws, the impossible must happen.

25. *As long as to the sea*: Cf. Eccles. 1:7, "Omnia flumina intrant in mare; et mare non redundat: ad locum, unde exeunt flumina, revertuntur, et iterum fluant."

26. *and beasts*: All beasts seeking refuge, all poets seeking truth.

29. *in her lovely breast*: Her hardened heart is constituted of ice; his of fire.

32. *between two rivers*: The Sorgue and the Durance.

35. *her shade*: He shadowed her forth wherever he was, giving form to his vision.

36. *shattered fog*: Nor did Jove's bolts of lightning affect him since he was protected by her immortal shade. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXIV, 149.

38. *on that day*: When he first saw her.

39. *sunlight opens*: Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* II, 317: "Rura gelu tunc claudit hiems."

67 SONNET

This and the next two sonnets, written during Petrarch's Roman journey in late 1336 and 1337, are a unit and speak of a comic struggle between two styles of love.

1. *On the left bank*: If traveling from Provence, the western shore of Italy.

2. *where the waves weep . . . break*: Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* I, 334: "Nunc nemora ingenti vento, nunc litora plangunt." He plays on the dual meanings of *piangere* (to weep) and its Latin form *plangere*, "to beat the head and breast as a sign of grief."

3. *that proud branch*: The laurel. Cf. 24.1.

5–6. *boiling / in the remembrance*: His love igniting his fire amidst all this water.

6. *her golden tresses*: Her curling hair is recalled rather than the eyes. Zingarelli notes that the more spiritual eyes are off-limits because "boiling" has infernal significance.

7. *a stream the grass was hiding*: Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* IX, XIX. Petrarch is probably referring to Tuscan love poetry with its highly sexual imagery. Cf. poem 69.

8. *fell, dead weight*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* V, 142: "come corpo morto cade."

12. *changed my style*: From having wet eyes to having wet feet, that is, turning tearful thoughts to verse (*piedi*) in this style.

14. *the others dry*: His tearful eyes would dry in a less cruel climate.

68 SONNET

"Jousting" thoughts are the subject of this sonnet directed to one or all of the Colonna family during Petrarch's sojourn in Rome. Head and heart struggle for supremacy.

1. *The sacred sight*: Of ancient Rome and, by contrast, the ruins of present-day Roman religion and culture.

2. *the evil of my past*: Cf. 53.77 and the thousand years of darkness resulting from the move of the Church to Byzantium.

3. *Get up, you fool*: As God ordered Ezekiel to do in the Old Testament.

5. *another one*: The *amoroso pensiero*, now calling him back to Laura.

10. *turn cold as ice*: From fear, compassion, or piety.

12. *the first returns*: The voice of his conscience.

and this one: The one nearest his heart, the voice of Love, gives way to the stronger voice he hears in Rome.

14. *on more than one occasion*: When one thought cedes to the other, a turning results. Compare sequences such as poems 54–55 and 62–63.

69 SONNET

On the trip from Marseilles to Rome, on the margin of the Tuscan coast, new voices make him realize the futility of struggling against Love.

1. *any human means*: Any advice from his senses.

3. *unkept promises*: Promises of mercy. Cf. 56.4

4. *fierceness of your claw*: Through struggle he has felt himself ever more firmly caught in love's grip. The word *artiglio* (claw), has the figurative sense of predation.

6. *the person who's concerned*: To whom it happened, himself.

8. *by Tuscan shores*: Italy's western coast, opposite old Etruria.

9. *I fled your hands*: He thought to escape his pain by leaving her behind.

10. *unknown and quite unusual*: Like *meraviglio* and *novamente* in line 5, these words speak of the uniqueness of this pilgrimage to Rome.

11. *the winds . . . driving me*: The force of events.

12. *out of nowhere*: *I' non so donde* suggests irony. These disembodied voices with messages of love resemble siren calls from an unexpected source.

13. *from one's destiny*: He, a Tuscan himself, must follow in that poetic tradition.

14. *one cannot fight it off*: Although he suggests that the voice of his conscience (the winner in sonnet 68.12) ultimately lost the battle, it may be that he has begun to learn the science of bringing the ship to port by negotiating the waves (tacking into the wind).

70 CANZONE

This canzone serves as an introduction to the three that follow, the so-called "canzoni of the eyes." They were all written in Avignon before 1337.

Poem 69, a sonnet, spoke of Tuscan love poetry as a remedy for the motion of the sea waves. This canzone brings that art into steady focus by weaving together verses from the works of five different love poets, concluding with the first line of Petrarch's poem 23, a canzone. Each stanza builds momentum on the strength of the one before it, summarizing as it goes the thought of the poet quoted in its own last line. In this way, the argument moves forward as if on waves, the final line of the canzone being the crest of the next wave, giving the effect of a manifesto.

1. *Oh what to do*: *Lasso me* carries a sense of limpness, echoed in the last lines of the canzone.

all that hope of mine: All the talent he possesses. He stands ready, but to what end?

4. *cast so many prayers*: In so many different directions.

6. *an end to my poor words*: That Love no longer deny him access to her.

8. *it please him*: *Non gravi*, that is, that it not weigh him down and cause him to be late or slow.

10. *It's right*: This line is quoted by Petrarch in Provençal: "Drez et rayson es qu'ieu chant em demori." It is the first verse of a canzone attributed either to Arnaut Daniel, the twelfth-century poet, or to William of St. Gregory, and its appearance at the end of the first stanza gives first place to that tradition.

14. *equal to my many woes*: To make equal is to bring into balance, a goal he seeks to achieve by "changing style" (cf. 67.12)

15. *those holy eyes*: This is the first time he has called Laura's eyes holy.

16–17. *receive delight . . . / . . . of mine*: That his poetry might please her to the point where she herself would sing it.

17. *some sweet words*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVI, 112, where the poet Guido Guinizelli's words are so described.

18. *above all lovers*: True happiness would come if he could elevate his poetry to match the holiness of Laura.

20. *A lady begs me*: This is the first line of the famous canzone by Guido Cavalcanti, "Donna mi priega."

21–24. *that step by step have led . . .* : He ascends with the measured steps of the philosopher, as did Cavalcanti.

23. *hard as stone*: *Smalto*, meaning enameled and fired.

24. *on my own*: Without her guidance.

29. *hard and bitter now*: Mirroring hers. His language becomes militant, shading into Dante's.

30. *So in my speech I now wish to be harsh*: This is the first line of one of Dante's "stony rhymes," a canzone.

31. *What am I saying?*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 595: "Quid loquor? aut ubi sum? Quae mentem insania mutat? Infelix Dido!" He recollects himself, as Aeneas did after Dido's suicide.

33–34. *My mind could run . . .*: He is not fated to be unhappy. Cf. line 10.

35. *if mortal veil it is*: The perceptions of the body, as well as the body itself.

36–37. *stars / or any lovely thing*: Stars signify a fixed reality; things a reality in flux.

39. *burden of the pleasure*: The sweet weight of his pledge.

40. *Her sweet presence, her soft and lovely glance*: This is the first line of a canzone by the Florentine poet Cino da Pistoia, a contemporary of Dante and Petrarch, writing on the occasion of the death of his lady.

41–50. *All things adorning . . .*: The final stanza, climaxing with the first line of Petrarch's first canzone (poem 23), begins with a thanksgiving of two lines and follows with two-line refrains of each of the preceding stanzas, giving the canzone a form which links beginning with end. The critical opinion that Petrarch wrote the canzone with the intention of outdoing his predecessors is not supported by the text. Rather, he identifies his own mental processes with that of each poet, producing a cumulative effect.

43. *but I*: He returns to the idea of the pilgrim in need of guidance.

45. *should I*: He returns to Laura's eyes, which tell him to acquiesce in blessedness.

48. *by their own fault*: An admission he has not made before.

49. *when I turned*: He returns to harsh reality, to his infirmity and the poor state of his soul.

50. *the sweet season*: Before that first day when he fell.

71 CANZONE

This canzone is one of three in a series, known as the "canzoni of the eyes," that are among the most admired of the collection. Petrarch himself calls them "sisters" and structures them identically except for the total number of stanzas in each. The first stanza here serves as a preface to poems 72 and 73.

4. *I hope for understanding*: In Laura's heart.

6. *that pain of mine*: A deeper, more serious pain beneath the abject surface pain. Cf. Ovid, *Ars amatoria* I, 574: "Saepe tacens vocem verbaque voltus habet."

9. *by nature lazy*: A faulty human art that attempts to reach the divine.

10–13. *acquires from the subject gracious habit*: Her loveliness, with all its gracious expressive qualities, schools him in an appropriate style. Dante and Cino da Pistoia also used the conceit.

14. *raised by such wings*: Provided to one who has intelligence of love.

15. *hidden for so long*: Which he has not been able to say for want of readiness.

17. *how much my praise falls short*: When his style is put to the service of such exalted subject matter.

20. *what no thought can hope to equal*: Thought alone cannot explain the power of his experience.

25. *that kind disdain*: Her human superiority. *Gentile* and *umano* are used interchangeably.

26. *my unworthiness offends*: The banked fire of a lover might have the appearance of timidity, a characteristic that squelches love. Cf. 23.90 ff.

28. *were not to temper flame*: Chill it.

29. *then, happy death!*: Otherwise he would have succumbed to those fires and been consumed.

32. *so strong a fire*: Of her holiness. Cf. line 24.

34–35. *but fear . . . / . . . strengthens the heart*: Tempers it so that it withstands her fire, like the forging of metal.

37. *O hills*: As if he turns and looks down from a height, under a burning sun, into a cool, shaded valley.

41. *fleeing is no help*: Cf. 69.12–14. His fate does not desert him, whether he stays or goes.

43. *a short and quicker way*: He would take the easy way out and cease to martyr himself.

45. *one who does not care*: For then he would die and who would know the difference.

46. *Sorrow, why*: He turns again, as if responding to another voice.

52–53. *colors Love / will often paint*: The pallor of fear is replaced by the flaming of his cheeks.

57–60. *you holy lights . . . / . . . what you are like*: Not only does her graciousness instruct his style, but it can be demonstrated that her holiness and happiness are mirrored in his face. The concept originally came from Plato's *Alcibiades* (Carducci).

66. *is separate from the natural face*: The beauty of her eyes has a divine origin, apart from nature's handiwork.

70–75. *Ah, why . . .*: The preceding thought brings forth a series of laments.

71. *give me that*: The blessing of her glance.

73. *at the destruction*: Cf. 2.13, where the word *strazio* first appeared.

74. *Why do you strip me*: Cf. 29.4 and 29.12, where similar images appeared.

76. *I must say*: *Dico* stands alone. The declarative mode elsewhere means he does not lie. See 23.156 and note.

77. *with thanks to you*: The one who destroys, strips, and disdains him is yet merciful.

80. *expels from there*: He refers to his *amoroso pensiero*, that unique thought that redeems a painful life.

81. *only one remains*: Only that memory of first seeing her compassionate eyes.

82. *This bit*: The next nine lines gather together the several themes of the canzone.

90. *I return to me*: He sums up these themes by returning to the beginning. A rephrasing might be: "And so alas it's fated that I return to me, always, by weeping, fighting against laughter."

91. *The amorous thought*: "Sweetness unusual and new" has its cognate in a thought he read in her eyes.

93. *draws out*: Cf. lines 74–75. Now she elicits, where before she stripped.

97. *Before your presence*: When he calls her into his mind.

100. *allow them entrance*: Memory protects the sanctuary of deep thought.

101. *the surface parts*: Cf. 2.8: "where every other arrow had been blunted"; see also 23.34: "had not pierced me beyond the clothes I wore."

103. *from you first comes the seed*: The amorous thought in her eyes, however fleetingly glimpsed, inseminated him. He is pregnant with it.

104. *an arid piece of land*: The image reinforces her miraculous qualities. She has become the male principal and he the female receptor.

105. *praise all goes to you*: Cf. line 45: "It is the fault of one who does not care." All that is life-giving comes from his love; all that is deathly from its absence.

106. *make me burn*: In anticipation of fruition.

107. *steals me from myself*: She ravished him.

108. *so be sure that you are not alone*: He intends to provide companions to his song, the sister canzoni which follow.

72 CANZONE

Following on a canzone that traces a gradual ascent marked by hesitation and digression, this work seemed to one commentator to flower into poetry "of complete and unmixed joy" (Zingarelli).

1. *I see, my gracious lady*: Her presence is intimately felt.

2. *when your eyes move*: Turn in his direction.

6. *and I can almost see it*: Her glance, like the dazzling light of a sun, so impressed itself on his heart that residual light still lingers.

9. *this alone sets me apart*: This gift from her.

12. *can make me feel*: The feeling that preceded thought in the creation of the universe, as shadow preceded light (Zingarelli).

17. *eternal Mover of the stars*: The God of the Empyrean, the first cause. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, 145.

20. *the prison I am locked in open*: Let his soul join them now. Cf. Cicero, *Somnium Scipionis* VI, 7: "Hic vivunt, qui ex corporum vinculis tamquam e carcere evolaverunt."

22. *I return to my accustomed war*: His earthly love.

23. *my day of birth*: 20 July 1304.

28. *a pleasure to myself*: Cf. 71.91–105.

29. *high and gracious thought*: His thought ennobled by intimate knowledge of her compassion, the *amoroso pensiero* of 71.91.

39. *sweetly consuming and destroying me*: Pleasure that feeds desire for the immortal, bit by bit using up the mortal.

45. *left there all alone*: In his heart only the inseminating shower of angelic sparks remains, and Love.

47. *lucky lovers*: Whose love was requited.

50. *the lovely black and white*: Her compassionate eyes. Cf. 29.23.

51. *Love takes delight*: Regarding *si trastulla*, Carducci notes the many classical uses of the word to express noble simplicity in play.

55. *Your veil*: Cf. poems 11 and 52.

56. *as does your hand*: The hand that denies.

60. *from your own changing look*: A subtle pause occurs at the end of this stanza, as if he has offended.

64. *I force myself to be*: He goes against his nature.

66. *noble fire*: A passion to be honest and virtuous, according to the courtly tradition.

71. *could help me*: Attract her merciful eyes.

74. *from fair eyes sweetly trembling*: Early commentators heard an echo of Juvenal, *Satires* VII, 241: "oculosque in fine frementes." Both Carducci and Zingarelli object, preferring Horace, *Odes* I, 22–24: "dulce ridentem Lalagen . . . dulce loquentem." That Laura might laugh mischievously is in dispute.

75. *ultimate hope*: That she might love him for his whole self.

76. *Song, just behind you*: The three canzoni are sisters adorning themselves and each other, suggesting their role as the three Graces (Brilliance, Flowering, and Joy), or the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

77. *same place*: In his imagination.

78. *I rule more paper*: He has more to say.

73 Canzone

The first of the sister canzoni began an ascent of the mountain, the second reached the summit, and this final one finds him descending once again to his war.

10. *my words burn*: As the wish of line 2 forces him to write poetry, so the very words in turn inflame him.

11–15. *nor does my talent . . .*: Although at times he fears his lack of genius, it is the words of Love themselves that undo him by their sound. In this canzone, hearing will be counterpoised with seeing.

16. *when I began*: Cf. 23.1–4, where he hoped to make his life less bitter by singing (*cantando*).

19. *this hope of mine*: Encouraged by a certain success, his hope burst forth in praise of her, but only for a moment. Cf. 23.50–60, the second metamorphosis.

22. *this lofty venture*: Of praising her eyes.

23. *my loving notes*: This and the sound of the words stress their music.

25. *and dead is Reason now*: Lines 25–30 were extensively reworked by Petrarch in 1353, long after he first composed them, according to Wilkins.

26. *who held the reins*: Reason once guided unruly desire, but Reason has been deposed by Love, to whom the poet cedes the lead position now.

27. *let Love show me*: He who is expert at finding the chink in one's armor.

29. *strike the ears*: *Percuote*, a word that wounds. The musical motif is repeated as if the poem were a series of sounds winging toward her susceptible ear.

my sweet enemy: Cf. 21.1. He would do her a turn and reach her heart through her ears, as his heart was reached through his eyes.

30. *pity's friend*: When she hears his song she will be moved to pity by his laments.

31. *I say*: Although reason is dead, he begins an argument quite rational in tone. He has used the phrase, "I say," in all three canzoni.

31. *if in that age*: During ancient times when men burned for knowledge. He refers to philosophers like Pythagoras and Plato, whose journeys into foreign lands qualified them for admission into the fraternity.

32. *true honor*: Acquired through deeds and experience of travel.

36. *their loveliest of flowers*: They gathered knowledge or virtue wherever they found it, traveling far and wide.

38. *to fill most perfectly*: Within those eyes repose all the honored things the ancients gathered from the loveliest flowers.

44. *run desirous toward death*: "Running toward death" is living only in time.

48. *to those two lights*: The constellations Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, shining in the polar region. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* V, 852: "clavumque affixus et haerens nusquam amittebat, oculosque sub astra tenebat."

49. *in the storm of love*: The tempest threatens his poetry by driving it to dangerous limits.

52. *do I steal from them*: His furtive glances are necessary, perhaps, because of her veil.

53. *now here, now there*: Love shows him how to move his searching eyes about, not resting them too long in any one place—a piquant image reminiscent of Dante.

55. *the little worth*: That he should have them as guiding stars is the cause of all the worth he possesses.

66. *every other beauty falls behind*: Laura's gentle eyes, with their promise of pity and mercy, contain in one place all the virtue "wished by God and Love and Nature" (l. 37). Other beauties follow in inferior positions.

69. *moves from their smile*: Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* XXVI: "Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare"; see also Dante, *Paradiso* XV, 34.

that holds and makes one love: Holds in harmony.

70. *Could I but see fixedly*: Were he able to gaze on the sight of her eyes without being overwhelmed by light.

72. *for just one day*: Cf. 22.31–33, where he wishes for one night with her in the amorous wood. "One day" is eternity.

75. *without blinking*: Without being hindered by the body.

76–78. *Alas* . . .: But none of these wishes is fulfillable. He seems to fall back in exhaustion.

81. *when too much light*: When he is overwhelmed by her splendor.

82. *were loosened*: The sense of loosening is contrasted with binding in, "I would gather up the courage."

85. *those wounds deeply pressed*: The ancient wounds he suffered in Love's first assault.

88. *my blood runs to hide*: Those wounds unmanned him, and even now his courage fails him.

89. *nor am I what I was*: When he walked free of love, in his youth.

90. *this is the blow*: Deep fear of unworthiness.

93. *that speak to me*: His canzone has been speaking to his lady. He now returns to counseling with himself to prepare for the sonnet that follows.

74 SONNET

In spite of its self-justifying conclusion, this sonnet succeeds in breathing scant life into the subject of her power.

5–6. *face and hair / and* . . . *eyes*: Three disembodied beauties.

9. *my feet are not worn out*: "Feet" also has the sense of poetic meter, still holding together.

10. *following your footprints*: Up and back down the mountain, as in the preceding canzoni.

11. *wasting uselessly*: This redundancy sums up the several images of emptiness he weaves into this sonnet, such as weary thoughts, burden of sighs, losing his tongue, and filling paper.

13. *fill with you*: Pages covered wtih script recall, in the word "fill," the experience he evoked in 72.43 of sweetness descending into his heart, melting him.

if I am wrong: If his love is in some way inappropriate to his subject matter.

14. *the fault*: *Colpa* refers back to the wound dealt him by Love.

not the lack of art: His natural talent lacks only the gracious gift of worthiness. Petrarch pursues the theme of art's power in the sonnets to follow.

75 SONNET

This sonnet expresses the perfect tension of his love.

2. *can heal the wound*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXI, 4; Pliny, *Historia naturalis* XXXV, 25 and XXXIV, 15; Ovid, *Remedia amoris* 44 and *Tristia* I, 1; Bernard de Ventadorn, "Ab joi mon" for references to the sword of Achilles.

3–4. *herbs or magic art*. . .: He cannot find the cure in folklore, the wisdom of the Magi, or in the philosopher's stone.

5. *have blocked my road*: Filled all space.

6. *one sweet thought*: The "amoroso pensiero."

7. *and if the tongue*: She has locked him into this impasse, and if he has been inveigled, it is her doing. Cf. 74.13–14.

9. *These are those lovely eyes*: He repeats the epithet three times in this sonnet.

9–10. *make the banners / of my lord*: The insignia of his lord, Love, an image of chivalry. Zingarelli notes that "everywhere" makes the poet's body a battlefield upon which love is victorious over heart, eyes, thoughts, tongue, voice, and feet.

13. *with flaming sparks*: Cf. 72.37–39.

76 SONNET

He notifies a friend that he is temporarily free of his burden; but out of the prison of love, he is a man marked by his chains, pale as death.

1. *Love, by alluring me*: Cf. 69.3; Love flattered him with sweet words and benevolent signs.

2. *my ancient prison*: His martyrdom to Laura.

7. *who would believe it*: Of one who had complained so much.

8. *return to freedom*: A hiatus between one poetic effort and another. His sighs express his desire for a new labor of love.

11. *my heart is signed*: His love is visible throughout.
14. *little time before he's dead*: Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* XXIII.

77 SONNET

Simone Martini, a well-known painter who was called to Avignon by Pope Benedict XII in 1339 to serve the papal court, illuminated a miniature portrait of Laura on parchment, which Petrarch praises in this sonnet. It was believed to have been painted when Petrarch was working on the *Secretum*, where Augustinus chides Franciscus for being enamored of a painting.

1. *Polyclitus*: Greek sculptor, d. 450 B.C. Pliny wrote about his bronze sculpture of an Amazon in *Historia naturalis* XXXIV, 55. Cf. also Dante, *Purgatorio* X, 32.
4. *part of the beauty*: He refers again to the sovereign eyes whose beauty has conquered his heart, filling it with divine sparks.
5. *Simon was in Heaven*: To be absorbed in rendering the beauty of Laura would be heaven enough.
6. *gracious lady comes*: From the divine idea.
8. *as proof down here*: As testimony.
13. *he came down*: Simone's act of creating her elevated him above all worldly cares.

78 SONNET

Since Simone Martini conceived his idea in Heaven (see 77.5), the poet fantasizes that Providence might have been even more generous, giving a voice and thoughts to Laura's lips and eyes.

5. *he would have freed*: He would have confirmed the poet's deepest wishes.
9–10. *begin to speak to her, / most kindly*: Pygmalion spoke to his statue, and she appeared to respond to his voice and touch.
12. *Pygmalion*: Pygmalion fell in love with his life-size statue of ivory, prayed to Venus for her life, and was granted his wish. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X, 212–97.
13. *a thousand times*: Pygmalion's statue, made living woman, returned his love with passion.
14. *yearn for just once*: Cf. the "one night" of 22.32, and the "one day" of 73.72. *Una volta* cannot be other than an event in time, an "audacious" wish according to one commentator, who excuses Petrarch on the grounds that he yearns for an image, not the real Laura.

79 SONNET

This observance of the beginning of the fourteenth year of his love dates the sonnet around April 1340. The rhymes alternate *abab* in the quatrains; this is only the second time he has departed from his customary *abba* form in a sonnet.

1. *answer to the start*: He visualizes the entire year, which has begun in travail.

3. *cool shade or aura*: Cf. 75.3–4, where neither herbs, magic art, nor exotic stone could heal his wound; here he cannot retreat to the laurel.

5. *with whom I'm undivided*: He refers to his thoughts, always consumed by Love. (Carducci suggests the meaning of "overripe" for *non amezzo*, allowed to hang too long on the vine.)

6. *never breathe with ease*: Because of the suffocating effects of his desire.

7. *so that I'm less than half*: Having passed his thirty-fifth year.

8. *too much looking*: Seeking signs of her love.

11. *she who looking at me*: The line suggests that she appeals to him for help, but he is silent (*chiusamente*, l. 10).

80 Sestina

Poem 79 signaled a change in mood from a sense of accomplishment to one of despair. This sestina gives form to the conflicts the unhappy soul encounters in seeking understanding.

1. *made up his mind*: Became firm in his desire for his high idea.

2. *upon deceiving waves*: The many contradictions that life reveals in pursuit of that idea.

3. *detached from death*: *Scervro*, recklessly not fearing death, as one who sacrifices himself. Cf. Beatrice in Dante, *Paradiso* XVI, 13. Vellutello cites Juvenal, *Satires* XII, 57.

in a little bark: *Legno*, signifying the mortal life of the soul.

4. *from his own end*: From danger of shipwreck.

7. *The gentle aura*: Laura.

8. *I gave on entering*: Entrusting to her superiority the guidance of his soul through the perilous sea of life.

9. *to a better port*: To a higher truth and the salvation of his soul.

10. *more than a thousand rocks*: A long history of potential shipwrecks.

12. *than is the bark*: His soul's desire to know, driving him toward those rocks.

13. *in this blind bark*: The mind or soul in its mortal body.

14. *wandered never looking*: He lost his bearings. Cf. Cicero. *Somnium Scipionis.*

16. *pleased the one*: God.

18. *to see the port*: Literally, "the port might appear to me." He was too close to danger even to see it.

19–22. *Just as a light . . .*: It is a clear, calm night, when the lights on the shore are visible from the sea. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXVI, 16–33.

23. *I saw the ensigns*: He charted his course from those stars above the inflated sail of his ambition.

24. *I sighed for my end*: For death into "that other" life of blessedness.

25. *not because I'm sure yet*: The words could be humble or they could be caviling. In 73.85–90, he shrank from his high enterprise, pleading wounds suffered long ago.

26. *with the daylight*: When the rocks will not be hidden in darkness and some of the day will be left to him.

28. *fragile is my bark*: He fears the perishability of his art.

31. *perilous rocks*: Perilous in the sense of *dubbiosi*, a reference to his uncertainty of mind in the last stanza.

36. *change my way of life*: Like Dante's Ulysses, he cannot end his journey until he knows how it will end.

81 SONNET

Among Carducci's favorites but criticized by those who seek signs of religious resolve in Petrarch, this sonnet borrows from Psalm 54 and the Gospel of Matthew. Because of the frankly political nature of the Psalm, this poem may contain complex messages. It begins a series of twenty-four sonnets.

1. *the old bundle*: For the burden of his sins, Petrarch chooses the word *fascio*, deeds both good and bad.

2. *of all my sins*: At various times in the *Canzoniere*, he names the sins contained in the bundle: sloth, anger, gluttony, envy, pride.

my bad habit: Of seeking Laura. He makes a semantic distinction between sin and his love for Laura.

3. *fear much to fail*: To be inadequate to the task of seeking her without becoming trapped in error.

4. *my great foe*: Since the next quatrain speaks of Christ as his friend, this "great foe" is Satan.

5. *once came to free me*: Christ.

10. *O you*: Petrarch paraphrases the words of Christ from Matt. 11:28: "Venite ad me, omnes. . . ." His temerity has caused comment, especially since he adds his own clause to Christ's words, "if no one blocks the way." Cf. Dante, *Inferno* V, 80–81, and *Purgatorio* XI, 1–24.

12–14. *What grace* . . .: The relevant passage from Ps. 54 is: Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbae; et volabo, et requiescam?" Carducci noted how he links the Old and the New Testament with these citations.

13. *those of doves*: Of peace.

14. *that I may rest*: That he may regain his strength for the hard climb.

82 SONNET

If poem 80 was penitential and 81 was a prayer for a sign from God, this sonnet puts religious feeling aside to speak again of his "bad habit."

3. *at the end of my self-hate*: His exile from himself.

6. *written to my loss*: For example, "Here lies Petrarch, who died unloved by Laura."

10. *without your breaking it*: That he not be undone by her merciful glance, losing full battle strength as a consequence.

12–13. *your disdain seeks / to fill itself*: To satisfy itself with proofs of his inadequacy.

13. *it errs, and won't succeed*: She has not looked beyond appearances and seen his worth.

14. *thanks to Love and me*: And to his constancy.

83 SONNET

Weak negatives alternate in this sonnet with the fierce reality of his love.

3. *I may take a chance*: He still, unwisely, seeks out her eyes, from which Love launched his first assault.
5. *I fear no longer*: He is now defended, whereas before Love caught him unawares.
7. *nor break*: Literally, "nor open." He has hardened his heart. Cf. 23.73.
8. *pitiless and poisoned*: Love is still able to invade him in a more generalized sense.
9. *tears escape my heart*: Find their way from Love's wounds to his eyes.
10. *they may know the way*: Through pain distilled.
11. *and barely*: He is just able to restrain his tears.
12. *the fierce ray*: The light of her eyes, to which he is reluctantly drawn throughout the sonnet.
13. *cruel, harsh image*: His primal vision of her.

84 SONNET

This sonnet is a dialogue between his heart and his eyes, which seem to sit in judgment on who is to blame for the poet's unhappiness. The idea may have come from Guido Guinizelli's sonnet "Dolente, lasso."

1. *Eyes, come now*: Resolute eyes that held back his tears in sonnet 83.
2. *suffer death because of you*: Consume itself bit by bit. His eyes permitted the arrows of Love to penetrate that first time.
4. *more for another's fault*: The heart's.
5. *as if to his own home*: Settling in as a bird would to its nest, giving power and seniority not only to Love but to the heart.
7. *We showed him in*: The eyes protest. Because of the desire stirred in the heart, they were moved to turn out of pity for it.
9. *The claims are not*: One cannot counter the first argument with the second, says the heart.
10. *in your first sight*: The heart's argument relies on the first motion of the eyes, establishing their culpability.
11. *most greedy*: Devouring her beauties.

12–14. *Now this is what makes us . . .*: The defense of the heart is, perhaps, less than judicious.

85 SONNET

This sonnet is interesting as a sequel to poem 84: final judgment has been postponed—guilt having been distributed among mind, heart, and eyes—and the poet, released, bursts forth in gratitude for the gifts of life.

3. *that place so sweet*: Where he first saw Laura.
4. *when Love saddens my heart*: On Good Friday.

9. *see them all together*: That harmony of joy, sadness, virtue, and beauty that characterizes the singular time, place, and circumstances of his falling in love.

10. *from every side*: *Or quindi or quinci*, literally, "now here, now there." Cf. 73.53.

12. *with what force*: As if time, place, circumstance, and the lady were Love's troops.

14. *yearn to live*: If he did not believe in the miraculous power of their encounter, he would cease to be.

86 SONNET

Having blessed the day in which all good converged for him he contradicts himself.

1. *detest the window*: Laura's eyes. "Io avrò sempre in odio" responds to "Io amai sempre" in 85.1.

2. *thousands of arrows*: Cf. poem 2.

3. *none of them*: None demanded that he martyr himself in this way.

4. *death would be lovely*: To die in a state of defendedness against love.

5. *But staying longer*: Literally "surviving," living just above death.

7. *that they will be immortal*: That his woes will accompany him into death.

8. *cannot be disentangled*: The errors of the heart threaten the soul's salvation.

11. *turn back time*: He cannot reverse his fate as easily as he reversed his words.

87 SONNET

Carducci admired this sonnet for the way it "presents, with such a high degree of elegance," Laura's "cold and cruel flirtatiousness with his passion."

1–4. *let the bowstring go*: Cf. the massacre of poem 2. The sound of the lines imitates the action, ending with line four's "tocchi," a light but decisive touch.

2. *an expert archer*: *Sagittario*, one of the attributes of Christ.

5. *you felt the shot*: She observed his reaction and knew in herself that her glance had reached its mark. Cf. the "graceful revenge" of 2.1

8. *eternal tears*: Of the eternal lover.

9. *I am sure*: The certainty of faith. Cf. line 3.

13. *my two enemies*: Laura and Love.

14. *not to kill me*: Cf. 86.3

88 SONNET

Half-horse, half-man, lame from combat, he flees Love's war. The sonnet ends with the news that his enemy has also been wounded, a bit of intriguing detail.

1–4. *Since what I hope for*. . .: He should have retreated when his soul was still unbloodied.

4. *than a gallop*: The word *galoppo* is used only once in the *Canzoniere*.

5. *now I do flee*: As an animal limps off to show his unwillingness to fight.

6. *twisted me*: Wounded on the left side, whereby "dead is reason now" (see 73.25).

8. *the scars*: The signs of struggle in the very verse he writes. Cf. poem 76.

11. *burns to extremes*: Causes you to lose your will to return.

12. *not one in a thousand*: Cf. 2.2.

13–14. *And certainly* . . .: Leopardi interpreted these lines to mean that Laura fell in love with the poet, departing from myth. Daphne was wounded with the leaden arrow, causing her to spurn Apollo.

13. *my enemy was strong*: He, "safe now," and she, wounded, survive to fight another day.

89 SONNET

He is freed from the prison of Love to pursue a lesser love—a liberty paradoxically more confining than before. The sonnet's figurative vocabulary suggests the metamorphoses of the silkworm, whose triple life the lover applies to his own.

1. *Escaping from the prison*: Cf. poems 67, 69.9, 76.1–4.

3. *would take too long*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV, 419–20: "Before I have the time I need to tell you / All of the things that take new forms."

4. *my new-found liberty displeased me*: Liberty from Laura (cf. poems 47 and 48) caused him to lose his purpose. He plays on the word *increscere*, an inversion of the verb "to grow," as well as on the figurative meaning of the silkworm, which is hidden desire.

7. *along the way that traitor so disguised*: Cf. the circumstances of *Vita nuova* IX, where Dante meets Love in pilgrim's garb along a river. See also Dante, *Paradiso* XX, 91.

13. *to free myself*: *Mi spetro*, "unrock myself," recalls 23.80–85. To free himself from this chrysalis, to emerge as the butterfly, is emblematic of the soul liberating itself from the body.

90 SONNET

Laura, perhaps less lovely now, is remembered at the peak of her beauty.

1. *flow free*: So Daphne appeared in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 529: "Et levis impexos retro dabat aura capillos"; and Venus in Virgil, *Aeneid* I, 319: "Dederatque comas diffundere ventis."

4. *whose light is dimmer now*: With the passage of time, as if the sun of a kinder civilization were sinking into the west. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV, the teaching of Pythagoras.

5. *the color pity wears*: Of pearl, balanced between paling and blushing.

6. *I did not know*: On that first day.

7. *with all Love's tinder*: With all his potential as a poet.

9. *was not the way*: He speaks of the past.

12. *a godly spirit and a living sun*: Christlike qualities were invested in her form, acts, and movements. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* I, 328: "dea certe, an Phoebi soror an nympharum sanguinis una."

13. *and if she is not now*: If Laura's beauty and virtue, and his ability to evoke them, have faded.

14. *my wound still bleeds*: This famous line, "piaga per allentar d'arco non sana," was taken as an emblem by King Rénard d'Anjou after the death of his wife Isabel of Lorraine. Chiari paraphrases: "I cannot help but continue to love her, just as the wound is not healed if the arrow in the bowstring is no longer poised to strike."

91 Sonnet

To his brother Gherardo, or to a poet friend, as consolation for the death of his beloved.

2. *has suddenly departed*: She has died at a young age.

5. *recover both the keys*: Cf. 37.35 and 63.11. The keys to will or not to will, say some; or the keys to pleasure or to pain.

7. *straight, clear path*: By her virtuous example she shows him the way.

9. *your greatest burden*: *Salma* is synonymous with the body.

10. *all the others*: Other worldly goods.

11. *rise up*: To go forth unencumbered. Petrarch uses the spelling *sallendo*, following the Provencal *saillir*, meaning to stand out, project, jut out. Zingarelli (and others) changed it to the conventional *salendo* because the other was "too jarring." I have kept the Provençal derivative as does the manuscript and Contini in his edition.

14. *the dangerous pass*: Judgment.

92 Sonnet

Petrarch's affinity for the older poet Cino da Pistoia was strong. This sonnet mourns the occasion of Cino's death in 1337.

1–4. *Now weep . . .* : The lines echo Cino and Dante (see *Vita nuova* III), also Catullus III: "Lugete, Veneres, Cupidinesque."

3. *whose mind was fixed*: Whose verse in honor of the beloved lady consumed his entire attention.

6. *stopping up my tears*: Heavy grief that did not permit tears pooled and petrified in the heart. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXIII, 49.

7. *be so courteous*: Although Cino suffered because of the premature death of his lady, his style remained gracious, and Petrarch would ask this favor of his own pain.

9. *let every verse*: Petrarch exhorts all to honor Cino as his Latin and Italian works honored all poets.

10. *messer Cino*: Cino was "master" of the form, teacher as well as practitioner.

11. *just now*: The word *novellamente* speaks of a vacancy only now turning up in the highest rank of love poets.

12. *Pistoia, weep*: In a much more moderate (courteous?) way than Dante, Petrarch inveighs against Cino's native city. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXIV, 126, and XXV, 10.

and all her wicked folk: The party of the Blacks, which exiled Cino in 1303. Blacks and Whites, the factions that threw into exile the families of Cino, Dante, and Petrarch, were given their names in Pistoia.

13. *lost a neighbor*: He laments political disunity that would drive away a loyal compatriot. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XI, 139–41.

14. *Heaven, celebrate*: Only there can neighbor be reunited with neighbor, great poet with great poet.

93 Sonnet

In this sonnet Love exhorts the poet to return to the golden subject from "other work" that has distracted him. In the next, Petrarch will attempt to work out a response to Love based on empirical evidence. The two sonnets are distinguished by their unusual rhyme schemes: *abba/abba/cde/edc* and *abba/abba/cdd/dee*.

3. *change . . . in color*: Render them pale as death. Cf. Ovid, *Ars amatoria* I, 729: "Paleat omnis amans, hic est color aptus amanti."

6. *famous example*: Cf. poems 1 and 23.9.

7. *other work*: Poetry on subjects other than Laura.

8. *while you were fleeing*: Cf. 39.3, 68.6, 69.9, 89.1.

9. *you saw me in*: He once saw love in Laura's eyes. Cf. 71.8, and 88.

12–14. *give back to me . . .*: "Turn in your weapon; you are discharged for failure to execute your duty to weep." Cf. 90.14.

14. *how I can feed on tears*: Cf. Virgil, *Eclogues* X, 29–30: "Nec lachrymis crudelis Amor, nec gramina rivis nec cythiso saturantur apes nec fronde capellae."

94 Sonnet

Petrarch uses this rhyme scheme only two other times, in poems 13 and 326. The equivocal rhyme *parte* appears in lines 2, 6, and 7.

1–8. *When through my eyes . . .*: He describes the psychophysiological effects of seeing his beloved, well known from Cavalcanti and given new spiritual depth by Dante in *Vita nuova* XX and XXI.

2. *the master image*: Of the ideal woman, transformed into this dominating image by his desiring mind.

all the rest depart: She fills his entire being.

3. *all the powers*: The vital spirits.

4. *like dead weight*: The body is left sweetly immobilized (the word *pondo* in Latin means a measure of weight in gold).

5. *this first miracle*: Miraculous for its transfiguring effects.

a second one: Somewhere between an exchange of glances, "the powers that the soul distributes" leave the lover's body and are received by the beloved.

8. *vengeance*: The exchange of love sometimes is reciprocal, and the game begins happily, although each lover is reduced by having sold his or her power to the other for the sweet golden words of Love (Love's vendetta).

13. *I saw two lovers*: Said to refer to an occasion when Petrarch observed his close friend Sennuccio del Bene (see poem 108 and notes) become enamored of Laura's female companion in Avignon (Daniello).

14. *mine often does*: Only his is transformed.

95 SONNET

The weighty physicality of falling in love, even when written about in words of gold, is compared with the lightness of his most deeply felt faith in Laura. The sonnet's irony lies in his transparency as a man before her gaze, when he desires to be most visible as a reflection of her splendor and piety.

7. *you see me naked*: Without defensive arms, entirely revealed. Cf. 71.74.

8. *although my pain*: He knows two kinds of pain, one which he expresses as his suffering—cries about—and the other the grief he experiences inwardly. Cf. 87.2–14.

11. *without words suffice*: This tercet speaks to her directly through her angelic intelligence.

12–14. *Alas, Mary or Peter were not harmed* . . . : Mary Magdalene and Peter were understood and beloved by Christ in spite of their shortcomings and humble origins. In Petrarch's continuing war with Love, however, even his own faith is an enemy. Cf. poem 87, where Laura the archer aimed at him with faith that the arrow would strike its target.

96 SONNET

This sonnet echoes others preceding it, combining and itensifying the contributing factors of his martyrdom.

1. *I am so tired*: Cf. 57.1–4 and 81.1. He is vanquished by waiting.

2. *the battle*: The continual tension between affirmation and denial in his poetry.

4. *every noose*: The tightening cord (*laccio*) recalls Laura's loveliness, which enslaves him.

5. *I bear painted*: The master image. Cf. 94.2.

7. *cruel tortures*: The word *martiri* appears for the first time since poem 55.

9. *I first went wrong*: His first youthful turning toward the elusive Laura.

11. *it's bad to follow*: A mildly ironic aside.

12. *unbound to its harm*: After subjects other than Love.

13. *do another's pleasure*: Then, turning back to Laura, whose lovely image compels him to suffer.

14. *sinned but only once*: The first time, when he chose to love (Carducci).

97 SONNET

He speaks again of his brief liberation, which revealed to him the falseness of any life apart from Laura.

1. *lovely liberty*: Cf. 23.112–120, 76, 89, and 96; see also Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 821: "pulcra pro libertate."

2–3. *what my state / was like*: The state of carefree innocence he enjoyed before he fell in love.

4. *the wound . . . cured*: He uses the word *guerrò* for "cured," close in spelling to *guerra*, "war." Cf. 75.2.

5. *My eyes . . . woes*: He took up his former work again, total absorption in love poetry.

9–10. *does not speak / about my death*: Does not regard him as a lost soul.

12. *in other directions*: He has touched on all the tools of the poet: eyes, ears, tongue, feet, and hands are in her service.

98 SONNET

Here Petrarch consoles his friend Orso dell'Anguillara (to whom he addressed poems 27 and 38) for circumstances that prevent Orso from joining in a noble combat.

1. *your charger*: Orso's desire is compared with a warhorse, well under the control of its master.

6. *stopped from going*: To the battlefield, which may be only a figurative expression for Orso's goal.

7. *everyone already knows*: By his reputation for bravery and readiness to fight.

8. *quicker*: In the past he had always been the first to respond to a call to arms.

9. *will be on the field*: His heart, in a pathetic fallacy that Carducci notes, will enter the battle somehow through the operation of Orso's good will, his affiliation by marriage with the Colonnas, his bravery, and his noble blood.

12. *shouting*: The heart calls out on behalf of his absent master.

99 SONNET

Also written to a friend—perhaps a member of the Colonna family—this sonnet has the poet standing aside from active life, wryly giving advice as the blind would lead the blind.

3. *never fails*: They had, perhaps, followed an idea of good as pleasure only. Cf. 13.10. True good cannot be false.

4. *that happier state*: Heavenly peace.

5–6. *like a meadow / . . . lies the serpent*: A common classical metaphor for life's pleasures.

8. *soul more tangled up*: Caught in the knots and complexities of life.

9. *So you, then*: A peremptory tone, in spite of the *voi* which he uses as a sign of respect.

13. *showing others the way*: Cf. poem 60.

100 SONNET

Although written at different periods, this and the next sonnet have the same rhymes and rhyme schemes and together mark the anniversary of the fourteenth year of his love, the year of his coronation as poet laureate (commemorated in poem 79).

1. *That window*: The eyes of the mind.

2. *one sun . . . the other*: Dante's *Monarchia* is a defense of empire as one sun and the papacy as the other. Petrarch here may disparage the papacy with his reference to its capriciousness ("any time it likes"), while putting empire at its zenith ("at noon").

3. *and that one*: The other window, the ear of the mind, which hears the north wind blow. In *fiede*, the Boreas "wounds" the ear, recalling the cruelty of the god who carried off Oriethyia to his wintry abode.

5. *the stone*: *Sasso*, elsewhere a term for the labyrinth that was the Avignon papacy.
on long days: Signifying summer, the season of harvest.

6. *talking to herself alone*: Laura unnoticed by others.

9. *and the fierce pass*: His unique moment in time.

11. *renews my ancient wounds*: As every year he mourns the death of Christ.

13. *deep*: Literally, "nailed high in the center of my heart," relating Laura's face and words to Christ crucified.

101 SONNET

Written some years later than poem 100 but linked to it in its rhymes, this sonnet turns attention away from the cherished scene toward the sound of that north wind portending death.

1–2. *she who pardons / no man*: Death.

2. *anguished prey*: Victims of premature loss.

4. *keeps faith with us*: Listens.

5. *little reward*: A response to his appeals has not been forthcoming.

10. *not deceived*: By the passing of time in a relative sense. He refers to the apocalypse.

11. *by forces*: Angelic forces.

12. *Passion and reason*: These are matched with seven and seven in the next line.

13. *better one will win*: Reason, man's access to the better state.

14. *see the good to come*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV, 878–79: "If prophecies of bards are ever truthful, / I shall be living, always."

102 SONNET

If Caesar can feign grief when he rejoices, Hannibal laugh when he grieves, and great historians mask men's true motives in their writings, why can't this love poet do the same?

1–4. *Caesar*. . . : See poem 44, which mentions this incident recounted by Lucan.

1. *traitor*: Ptolemy betrayed Pompey, who had sought refuge from Caesar in Egypt.

3. *clearly felt*: *Manifesta*, that is, his real feelings were known to God.

5–7. *Hannibal* . . . *laughed loud*: When the vanquished city of Carthage could not raise the money to pay tribute to Rome, as recounted in Livy's history of Rome XL, 35, Hannibal laughed—he himself said—as a man driven insane by calamity.

8. *bitter disdain*: For his fellow Carthaginians, who did not rally to his cause.

11. *a cloak that is different*: The face is veiled with the contrary emotion. In *Africa*, Petrarch wrote that poetry covers the naked truth with new garments, "making truth at times clear, at times hidden" (Bernardo).

12. *I laugh or sing*: Each suggesting its opposite. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXI, 106–108.

14. *of hiding*: The contrary "dark" face is implied. So if at any time he weeps in anguish, he may do so because he has no other way of hiding his bitter laughter.

103 SONNET

Apparently written to Stefano Colonna the younger, who killed in combat two members of the Orsini family who attacked him near San Cesario in May 1333. Stefano's death during the brief tribuneship of Cola di Rienzo signaled the collapse of Petrarch's hopes for a unified Italy under the Church of Rome.

1. *did not know how*: Hannibal was criticized for failing to follow up on his victories, particularly in Cannae in 216 B.C.

2. *victorious fortune*: Cf. Livy's history of Rome XXXII, 28: "vincere Scis, Hannibal, victoria uti necis."

5. *The bear*: The Orsini family.
cubs of hers: Bertoldo and Francesco Orsini, killed by Stefano.

7. *hardens teeth and claws*: Becomes stronger and more ferocious in vengeance. Cf. Statius, *Thebais* II, 130: "Bella cupit, laxatque genas et temperat unques."

8. *on us*: On all followers of the Colonnas.

10. *do not* . . . *rest*: This note of bellicosity is rare for Petrarch.

11–12. *where your fortune / is calling to you*: Expressing his faith in the Colonnas and his belief that theirs was a noble and just cause.

104 SONNET

This sonnet is addressed to Pandolfo Malatesta of Rimini, who at the time of writing was an up-and-coming captain of the cavalry. His valor against German mercenaries in Romagna had impressed Petrarch. They became friends in 1356, and Petrarch made him a gift of a collection of his rhymes in 1372.

1. *hoped-for virtue*: The valor the poet had hoped to find in a worthy subject. Cf. 28.1.

flowering in you: Pandolfo may have been as young as eighteen at the time.

2. *when Love started*: Love of the right cause.

6. *far greater still*: Cf. poem 40. He may have had in mind a major work he hoped Malatesta would support.

7. *in no way can sculpture be*: Cf. poem 77, another comparison of sculpture with poetry.

so solid: For all its beauty and integrity, marble does not flower or produce fruit.

9–10. *Caesar or Marcellus, Paulus or Africanus*: Roman generals. Do the works of these heroes act on the minds of men because of the sculptor's art?

12. *are frail*: Like the human body that is their model, even solid marble and bronze crumble in time.

13. *our work*: Which seeds itself in the minds of good men, linking valor to valor through a passion for good.

105 CANZONE

This work has been compared to a *frottola* (tall tale) or *descort* (dissent), two Provençal forms that were common vehicles in the period for political and moral ideas. In spite of its seeming incoherence, Petrarch's canzone is distinguished by the integrity of its form. The six stanzas are rigorously constructed, with rhymes interwoven so that they link not only eleven-beat lines but five- and seven-beat divisions within those lines, forming a careful network of ideas. While the sounds, even the thoughts, seem discordant in the beginning stanzas, they are connected on an abstract level by the events of the poems that came before. At line 52, discord seems to be overwhelmed by a runner coming up from behind, who cuts short the poet's irritable grumbling so that he gives in laughing once more to his love.

The persona Petrarch assumes is that of the disaffected lover playing buffoon, who makes himself the object of amusement while directing his barbs at very different targets. The canzone echoes the Bible, particularly the teachings of Paul and Proverbs.

1. *I never want to sing*: The proverb is Tuscan and means he has lost the desire to enchant.

2. *no one understood me*: Cf. 1.9–11. The true meaning of his love poetry had been misinterpreted.

3. *in a lovely place*: In her presence.

5–6. *It is snowing . . . and day is getting close*: Cf. Dante, *Convivio* IV, 7, 60: "Nevato è sì che tutto copre la neve." Cf. Rom. 13:11.

9. *who looks*: Laura has taken a virtuous, detached stance.

11. *Love rules*: An old proverb.

12. *let him turn back*: *Redire in viam* is a Latin proverb. Cf. 54.10.

15. *let him now*: One paraphrase would be, "He who can't do as he wishes, does as he can."

nice glass: Clear truth will suffice.

16. *but no longer*: Cf. 95.12.

18. *Bad tribute*: A proverb from a feudal system that exacted heavy payment to the Lord. In 101.8, "tribute" meant the poet's tears.

19. *I get free*: *Mi spetro* (unrock myself).

20. *I hear*: He "heard" perhaps from his own canzone, 23.49–80. Phaeton rebelled against Zeus, the temporal power.

21. *blackbird*: A saying meaning that spring has come and gone. The term also applies to members of the opposing party, in this case the Blacks.

23. *a rock amid the waves*: Cf. the *scogli* of poem 80. He seems to address those (or the one) who scorned him in line 2.

24. *nor birdlime*: One of Love's many snares.

25. *excessive pride*: Cf. line 10. *Bella* is contrasted with *amorosa*. Excessive pride is inimical to virtue.

27–30. *some answer . . .*: Here he describes himself in his transformations.

29–30. *and some . . .*: He and other unfortunate lovers.

31. *out of style*: An ironic dissent.

34. *A humble lady*: Cf. 23.104–105. There is a time for humility and a time for boldness.

35. *A fig*: A version of the truism that you canot tell a book by its cover. "Fig" is a disparaging term for a female and the essence of sweetness.

36. *things that are too hard*: It's better not to bite off more than you can chew, as the saying goes.

37. *good dwelling places*: Suggestive of other women. This saying is linked with line 13 and both are drawn together in line 80.

38. *can kill someone*: Cf. line 20.

39. *joined the dance*: The "dance" is figurative for worldly activity.

40. *That little left*: The worldly life he has left.

43. *shelters in the woods*: This God is merciful and offers the erring believer protection and solace on the path to redemption.

45. *step by step*: "Lead me to graze" (*a passo*).

46. *don't understand*: Faith is not found in books, nor true knowledge in the appearance of things.

47. *who sets the net*: Cf. Prov. 1:17 "Frusta autem iacitur rete ante oculos penatorum."

48. *who is too subtle*: To break your head over subtleties is to overlook the simplicity of God's truth. Cf. 2 Cor. 3.

49. *Let not*: A legal term, "contractus non debet claudicare." Cf. Gal. 3:23.

50. *one descends*: Into life in order to gain knowledge—a Neoplatonic concept derived from Orphic beginnings.

52. *a hidden beauty*: The *amoroso pensiero* that converts him from a cynical voyeur to a loving man.

53. *blessèd be the key*: Petrarch turns the canzone on this line, moving from subtlety to song.

54. *and shook it from*: Not the primal events but a response to a glance she seems to have turned on him in reaction to his words.

57. *another grieves*: The style of these two lines recalls the poetry of Pier della Vigna, a member of the Sicilian school who wove similar elegant conceits. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XIII, 58–60.

60. *no more, yet it's no less*: Inexhaustible but sweet. Cf. 23.4

61. *In silence*: In solitude.

62. *sound*: Of her words being uttered.

63. *dark prison*: Love.

64. *nocturnal violets*: Emblems of virginity and sacrifice.

65. *wild animals*: Cf. 56.7–8, "And in my sheepfold what wild beast is roaring? / Between the grain and hand what wall exists?"

68. *where it is*: Vaucluse, but more specifically, in his poetry.

69. *love and jealousy*: The first use of the word "jealousy."

75. *while I wear these clothes*: As long as he lives.

76–90. *I weep . . .* : The final stanza gathers up this network of concepts linking his faith. No congedo is necessary.

77. *in what I hear*: Her sweet words.

78. *I enjoy and wait for better*: Like a wise Solomon standing back from the fray and passing his knowledge on to the younger generation.

79. *I'm silent and cry out*: Two contrasting biblical injunctions, the one meaning to be silent about evil while listening to the teachings of wisdom, the other to voice a general lamentation as an expression of the people's pain.

80. *on a good branch*: He rests above warring elements. He refers to the Cross here as well as to the laurel.

81. *the great refusal*: His turning to God.

82. *the base affect*: The jealousy of line 49 that drove him to crave possession of her.

86. *bold enough*: Cf. line 36. He has resolved to tell the truth, to stand out, to whatever end.

106 MADRIGAL

In the first madrigal in the *Canzoniere* (poem 52), Laura appears as a shepherdess; in the second (poem 54), as a pilgrim. Here she descends from the sky as an angel.

2. *desended*: As a soul descending into corporeality. The "quick wings" of line 1 imply sagacity.

to the fresh shore: Some take this to be a riverbank in Vaucluse, but metaphorically, on the threshold of his new life.

3. *all alone*: The miraculous and the predestined are joined in this tercet.

4. *with no friend and no guide*: Like Beatrice descending to aid Dante, she is responding to his need for spiritual guidance.

5. *a trap that she had woven*: *Ordire* (to weave) has a figurative sense of "scheming." She is beautiful by design.

out of silk: The subtlest fabric, full of lights and shadows.

6. *within the grass*: A new, fresh growth of hope implicit in "greened."

7. *I was not unhappy*: His memory has sweetened.

8. *light came spreading*: As a gradual revelation.

107 SONNET

This begins a series of twelve sonnets encompassing the passing of the year 1341–1342, as this sonnet commemorates the fifteenth year of his love and poem 118 the sixteenth.

The twelve were written in different periods over a span of about six years when Petrarch spent considerable time in Vaucluse. Zingarelli believed that the series expresses feelings of anticlimax that Petrarch suffered after his coronation as poet laureate in 1341.

2. *have fought me*: In an inner war with himself.
5–6. *loving rays / that night*: Cf. 106.8, "the sweetest light."
11. *light lit from it*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXII, 10–12: "Love, / kindled by virtue, always kindles love, / if the first flame is clearly visible."
12. *laurel tree*: Such a wealth of hope and glory has sprung from the first poet. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXI, 94–96.
such forests flourish: With the spread of language and culture, like a vast root system. Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* IV, 273: "Namque uno ingentem tollit de cespite silvam."
13. *my foe*: Love leads him to deeper and deeper researches.
14. *can lead me*: By means of grace and beauty.

108 Sonnet

The sonnet is addressed to Sennuccio del Bene through the medium of the beloved terrain where Petrarch first saw Laura. Sennuccio, an older Florentine poet who fled into exile in 1311, lived for a time in Avignon. He and Petrarch were close friends, and poems 112, 133, 144, and 287, all of them sonnets, are also addressed to him, the last on the occasion of his death in 1349.

1. *More fortunate*: By destiny and miraculous happenstance. Cf. 106.1–4.
2. *Love stop in her steps*: He saw the action of love in the eyes she turned on him.
4. *clear peace*: The effect of the emerging sun that clears the sky.
5. *solid diamond*: Beauty cut from time.
8. *fills my heart*: Cf. 72.43.
9. *I shall see you*: Avignon and its environs.
10. *bend to seek*: With reverence.
12. *a noble heart*: That of Sennuccio, also a love poet.
13. *beg of my Sennuccio*: He asks the land to touch his friend with the same inspiration he has experienced—a gracious way of requesting a poem or two from Sennuccio.

109 Sonnet

Poem 107 began this cycle of twelve sonnets with a centering of his mind in the earthly place where he first saw Laura.

3. *those burning sparks*: Cf. 70.37. Castelvetro (1582) related these sparks to the four of poem 165, consisting of her walk, glance, words, and gestures.
4. *fire . . . immortal*: Memories are like embers continually renewing his fire.
5. *I calm myself*: With solitude and contemplation.

6. *vespers, dawn*: The sequence of 2, 3, 1, 4 in the canonical hours is repeated in the action of the poem, whose four parts seem to make four seasons of his "day," summer, autumn, spring, and winter, by evoking noon, evening, dawn, and curfew.

8. *I think of nothing else*: He focuses on the beauty of their effects.

9–11. *The gentle aura . . .*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVII, 91–117.

13. *forever in that air*: In Dante's *Purgatorio* XXVII the air of the Earthly Paradise moves constantly; it "strikes and makes the dense leaves of the forest sing" and is "pregnant with its special power." Petrarch's sonnet provides a gloss on Dante's imagery.

110 SONNET

The sonnet illuminates the fearful and mysterious connection between himself and the divine Laura. Both this and the next sonnet speak of the meaning of her greeting, as Dante spoke of the greeting of Beatrice in the *Vita nuova.*

1. *to that same place*: Of contemplation.

3. *all of my old thoughts*: Those of love, defending him against doubt. Cf. 111.3.

5. *I turned*: Cf. Rev. 1:12: "Et conversus sum, at viderem vocem, quae loquebatur mecum."

saw a shadow: Her living form, shadow of her mortality.

6. *stamped by the sun*: As if imprinted on the earth by the powerful light behind it.

7. *that it was she*: The divine Laura.

8. *godly state*: Cf. 106.1–2.

12. *as lightning comes*: As thunder follows lightning by a few seconds, God's judgment is revealed in the prophecies. Cf. Rev. 8:5.

111 SONNET

Fear of death and God's swift judgment are quickly forgotten when he considers the lady's lovely self and greeting.

1. *in her eyes bears my heart*: She has recognized love in his eyes and responded in kind.

3. *lovely thoughts of love*: Cf. 110.4.

5. *in such condition*: She interprets his pallor not as ardor but as piety, and so she does not disdain him.

6. *with color so astounding*: Fresh, young, and new—the color of the glad maiden.

8. *drop all his arms*: The disarming qualities of Laura would be sufficient to bring peace to the land.

13. *reconsidering her greeting*: In *Vita nuova* III, Dante describes the effect of Beatrice's greeting in prose. Petrarch thinks it over in song.

14. *I feel no pain*: Cf. Plotinus's "Intellective Act," in the full experience of which the soul is immune from care and trouble. See also 105.60, "I feel no more yet it's no less than ever"; and poem 12, line 3.

112 SONNET

The odd contrasts of the last two sonnets are explained in this addressed to Sennuccio del Bene, who was residing in Avignon (close to Vaucluse), where all Petrarch's thoughts were drawn because of Laura's presence there. Repetition of the adverbs *qui* (here) and *ora* (now, then) creates a seductive design for the eye as well as the ear.

4. *caught in the aura*: Turned by the breeze while dangling in a snare of love.

5. *here, and there*: Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* II, 771–74 (Zingarelli).

7. *in virtue, then lightheartedness*: Apparently these styles are at odds. Cf. 261.6, where he would join honesty and *leggiadria*, and 297, where they are "rivals."

8. *docile, and then fierce*: In 126.29 he will unit these two qualities ("torni la fera bella et mansueta"), but at present they are in contrast to one another.

9. *she sang here*: For the first time he mentions her singing among her several beauties.

here she sat: Cf. poem 100.

10. *held back her steps*: Cf. 108.2.

12. *pronounced a word*: Cf. 111.9.

13. *In thoughts*: It may be that each of these thoughts represents the topic of a sonnet that Petrarch was sending to his friend, with this as a cover letter to accompany them.

113 SONNET

This and the next sonnet date from Petrarch's second residence in Vaucluse, between the spring of 1342 and September 1343; they were addressed to Sennuccio del Bene. The first casts an idyllic Vaucluse against the "wicked Babylon" (Avignon) of the second, and both extend the hand of friendship to the older poet.

1. *where there's only half of me*: Because half of his soul is with Sennuccio, as Horace said of Virgil in *Odes*, I, 3, 8: "et serves animae dimidium meae."

3. *the tempest*: Threatening political developments.

5. *Here I am safe*: Detached from court life and its hazards.

6. *I do not fear the lightning*: Cf. 111.8. One of the laurel's attributes is its imperviousness to imperial rage.

9. *the realm of Love*: Where thoughts of Laura reign.

10. *birthplace of that aura*: Cf. 109.9–14. Although some believe this to be Laura's hometown, it is solitude and tranquility that produce the circumstances for poetic inspiration.

11. *banishes the thunder*: Cf. poems 108, 109, and 111.

13. *put out the fear*: He refers to the events of poem 105 the following. Cf. 110.9.

114 SONNET

He writes now to a friend whose company in Vaucluse he desires, perhaps to an uncle of Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, who had been suffering from gout.

1. *From wicked Babylon*: From Avignon, the papal seat, to which Petrarch gives the name applied in early Christian times to ancient Rome because of its corruption. Cf. Rev. 17:5; and Dante, *Purgatorio* VI, 76–78: "Ah, slavish Italy . . . / . . . whorehouse of shame."

6. *now herbs and flowers*: What he gathers from his reading.

9. *the masses*: Cf. 105.83. He is speaking of people who read him but do not understand him.

for Fortune: Capricious Fortune goes against him more often than not. Cf. 53.85–87.

11. *much heat*: He has left burning behind in Avignon, where Laura now resides.

13. *peace*: *Pacificato*, used only this one time in the *Canzoniere*, refers to Apollo's healing powers as the god of poetry.

and humble: In contrast to proud or disdainful.

14. *the other*: His friend in whom he looks for firmness of purpose.

foot more firm: Of a person steady in virtue, moving on the right path.

115 SONNET

This sonnet echoes the style and milieu of poems 34 and 43, where Apollo figures strongly.

1–4. *Between two lovers . . .*: A group portrait of Apollo, Petrarch, and Laura, enclosed in Love's circle.

2. *honest and proud*: Laura's aspect as she descended from heaven in angelic form.

that lord: Love.

4. *the sun*: Apollo.

5. *closed in by the sphere*: Of Love. Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* XII, "Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferente partes; tu autem non sic" (I am like the center of the circle, equidistant from all points on the circumference; you, however, are not).

8. *be hostile*: Unsoftened by love.

11. *such an adversary*: Apollo, competing with him in the field of love.

12–13. *around his face . . . / . . . a little cloud*: The face of Apollo, god of light and song but also of mental and moral purity.

14. *at having lost*: Lost some of his light to the poet.

116 SONNET

He has left behind the object of his desire and retired to Vaucluse with his loving thoughts, unsullied by Avignon.

1. *indescribable*: Ineffable, goddesslike.

2. *my eyes drew*: As if he were a bee extracting honey.

3. *the day*: On which she greeted him.

5. *I left what I want most*: Laura when he left Avignon behind.

9. *Into a valley*: *Una valle chiusa*; a specific reference to Vaucluse, his refuge and fortress.

11. *thoughtful and late*: having lingered too long in Avignon.

12. *no ladies there*: No models for comparison.

14. *my thoughts draw*: Projecting her form against the landscape, or discovering within the valley, rock, and fountain an image of her.

117 SONNET

Vaucluse is a small valley almost surrounded by a mountain whose rocky face rises up on the east and whose shoulders descend on each side down around the banks of the Sorgue river, creating a narrow access to the valley from the west, where Avignon lies across a plain. The poet imagines a turn of the mountain's shoulder away from Avignon and toward the southeast and Rome. Cf. Vellutello's map of 1544, included in Wilkins (1951), where the terrain is suggestive of the female form.

3. *turned by natural disgust*: Out of aversion for the papal court in Avignon.

4. *back to Babel*: The Babylonian city where pride and presumption earned God's revenge against language. See Gen. 10.

5. *a kinder road*: With the mountain facing southeast, his sighs could be carried on the west wind.

6. *where their hope lives*: In the ideal Laura, whose relocation in Rome would be the realization of his hopes.

7. *scattered*: As it is, he bucks the wind from his position east of Avignon, where the real Laura is.

7–11. *each one arrives / . . . to be in those parts*: These lines play on the idea of his rhymes as fragments, seeds he scatters blindly hoping that they will germinate since he has not heard otherwise.

12. *The pain comes*: From the knowledge (my eyes) that on the last day (dawn) his greatest hope (to see again the lovely places) will not be realized.

118 SONNET

At the completion of this sonnet cycle of twelve, which was preceded so fortuitously by the pleasure of her greeting in poem 106, he finds himself arriving where he began.

1. *sixteenth year*: Poem 107 marked the fifteenth year with an image of him caught in time.

2–3. *moving forward / toward the last*: Like the sun's motion toward the horizon, he progresses toward eclipse.

6–7. *that life outlast / cruel fortune*: That conditions might change for the better before he dies.

8. *close the lovely eyes*: That Death might take Laura, who is his only inspiration.

9–11. *I'm here, alas . . .*: In Vaucluse. The syntax of this tercet is very similar to that of 107.9–11, suggesting a correspondence.

10. *were elsewhere*: With Laura. He is drawn back to Avignon.
11. *unable to do more*: A new situation in which conflict results in no progression.
12. *from old desires*: Found to be insufficient.
14. *thousand turnings*: *Rivolte*, turnings in an opposing direction.

119 CANZONE

This canzone restores balance to his vision, which was found in poem 118 to be inadequate. Vellutello and Bembo in the fifteenth century and many others after them named the personae of the canzone Glory and Virtue, one the shadow of the other, hidden from the world but both deriving from the same seed. The classical and biblical sense of glory (Greek *doxa*) has altered over the centuries so that contemporary definition tends toward fame and reputation. Petrarch makes a distinction between glory as divine virtue manifested in the world by the Coming of Christ, and glory as virtue acted out by His example, or evangelized; in the protagonist's case, it is a reminder of a failed duty.

2. *just as old*: She was present at the creation as the glory of God.

3. *with beauty world-renowned*: Famous now in the form of Laura, obscure at the beginning (cf. 4.12–14.) The word *famosa* defines her material beauty.

4. *at early age*: In his adolescence.
her ranks: Of love poets.

5. *in my thoughts*: An echo of the priest's confessional prayer at the altar, "cogitatione, verbo, et opere."

6. *one of those rare things*: Laura in the beginning stood out among God's creations, as it is written in his poems.

7. *a thousand roads*: Through all his wanderings and turnings in history.

8. *proud and lovely*: *Leggiadra* at this point suggests the grace of youth but also a state of innocence.

12. *hard work*: His study of poetry, philology, and philosophy.

19. *more certain proof*: Of his constancy but also his capacity for understanding.

20. *shadow, veil, or garment*: Like the veil, a temporal and partial good.

22–23. *believing / to have seen much*: With the complacency and ignorance of youth.

24. *makes me happy*: The pleasure he gains from his early arguments exceeds his dismay over their follies.

25. *a little more of her*: Now that she has revealed her face and he can better endure the strong light of truth, with its effect of darkening shadows. Cf. poems 110, 115.

33. *that I embraced her feet*: An act of reverence.

34. *more sweetness*: By demonstrating a surface humility, he earned a measure of her love. Cf. 23.132–136.

35. *removed the veil*: In poem 23, his humility deceived the lady, causing her to lower her guard temporarily.

38. *whatever is befitting*: His level of understanding. Cf. Love in Dante, *Vita nuova* XII: "'Do not ask more than is useful to you.'"

42. *cannot wish or unwish*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXXIII, 28–30.

43. *so marvelous in tone*: Attuned and enriched by compassion and wisdom. Cf.

Dante, *Purgatorio* XXX, 84.

49. *sparks for me*: Yearn to dedicate themselves to her.

50–51. *my enemy . . . / soon puts them out*: Love of comfort extinguishes them.

52. *another ruler reigns*: Pleasure.

60. *your eyes more fortunate*: He is ready to be further enlightened.

62. *raise your eyes*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXXI, 68.

63. *that more hidden place*: To the truth within her eyes.

65. *in shame*: Confusion. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXX, 76–78.

71. *so now I seem less lovely*: She reads his mind.

75. *one seed, one birth*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXXI, 79–81: "Then when I turned my unsure eyes once more, / I saw that Beatrice faced the beast, / who in two natures is one single being." Petrarch refers to the Old Testament sense of glory, which is God's presence in the person of Christ—the duality of human and divine.

76. *the knot was broken*: Having understood the nature of his confusion, which was to try to distinguish the invisible lady from the visible, he finds his voice.

80. *and I began*: Starting with that note of doubt, "If."

81. *blessèd the father*: The words seem facile.

85. *much more than I show*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXXI, 37–39.

88–89. *she held / her gaze*: Her long look at him seems quizzical, as if in response to his speech.

93. *What good did it do you?*: She addresses mankind (*miseri*).

94. *possessed the defect*: Better that they had been merely human.

95. *Beloved and lovely*: In the Golden Age.

97. *this one beats her wings*: Like the soul desiring to be reunited to God, Virtue yearns to depart the world.

99. *am shadow*: The visible manifestation of the soul of mankind for whom virtue was intentionally created.

100. *understand in brief*: Cf. line 38. He has heard all that is befitting his years.

103–105. *garland of green laurel. . .*: Crowning him as a gesture of faith. Cf. 359.49–52.

106. *words obscure*: Their true import is merely hidden, as the lady has demonstrated.

108. *another messenger*: Another canzone in which truth may be less obscured by shadow.

112. *deceive me*: "Deceive" makes it clear that truth is still ambiguous in the mind of the lover.

120 Sonnet

In the final months of 1343, while Petrarch served Pope Clement VI as ambassador to Queen Giovanna I in Naples, rumors of his death circulated in Italy. Petrarch composed this sonnet in response to a long poem of Maestro Antonio de' Beccari da Ferrara that was written to lament the passing of the poet laureate and to praise him. The sonnet, standing singly between a canzone and a madrigal, serves notice that Petrarch is not yet dead, either as man or as poet.

3. *took them in*: This quatrain may be a joking allusion to the length of Beccari's canzone (Carducci).

5. *those final bites*: Death is a beast devouring him bit by bit. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* VII, 31.

7. *not yet felt*: He lives, although at one point he nearly died, unaware of his peril.

8. *threshold*: The image may have its antecedent in a work of Guittone d'Arezzo: "Ratto son corso già sino alle porte."

9. *I came back*: Cf. 54.10.

12. *I could not read*: Predict the hour of his death.

14. *worthy to be so honored*: There may be some irony in this closing line, since ill-will toward Petrarch following his coronation may have been the cause of the rumors of his death.

121 MADRIGAL

This madrigal, the last of four in the *Canzoniere*, replaced a ballata that appeared in the First Form of the collection, "Donna mi vene spesso nella mente," in which Petrarch seemed to speak of loving two women, leading some readers to conclude he had been unfaithful to Laura. The romantic longing of "Donna mi vene" contrasts sharply with the playful sophistication of this madrigal, whose appearance here may illustrate yet another stylistic turning.

1. *Now, Love:* Bantering, taking Love to task for his powerlessness in the face of the young girl's virtue. Cf. Dante, *Rime*, "Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna / la tua virtù non cura in alcun tempo."

2. *disdains your rule*: She is detached from mortal love.
my harm: His painful state, the wound of his love.

3. *between two foes*: Between Love and himself.

4. *armor*: In a state of readiness.
in braids and dress: Cf. 29.1–3.

7–8. *mercy / still keeps your bow intact*: If hope that she will relent still keeps Love strong enough to make the assault. Cf. 119.28–30.

9. *take vengeance*: Redeeming his heart by causing her to fall in love. Cf. poem 94.

122 SONNET

An anniversary poem commemorating 6 April 1344, three years after his coronation and at the age of forty.

1. *heavens have revolved*: Turning through the signs of the zodiac seventeen times.

2. *first burned*: First saw Laura.

5. *the saying is*: The Latin proverb "Lupus pilum mutat non mentem."

6–7. *senses slacken / . . . intense*: This love of his surpasses the sensual.

8. *heavy veil*: The body, whose pull draws the soul into shadow. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 732.

10. *flight*: When he looks "on high," charting his course in soul time. Cf. Cicero, *Somnium Scipionis*.

11. *I step out*: In Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVI, the souls of the lustful, in particular the

love poets, do penance in the wall of flames from which they are careful not to step until their time has come to ascend the mountain.

13. *please these eyes*: Appear free and purified of the shadow.

123 SONNET

Thinking more about the kind of love he saw in Laura's eyes reminds him of the truth of what he has heard, that in Paradise such freedom is possible.

2. *mist of love*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* V, 133, where Francesca describes a similar blushing and paling just before succumbing to love.

3. *nobly was presented*: With such majesty through his eyes.

4. *he went up*: Her color was matched by his as he paled at what he saw.

5–6. *how in Paradise / one sees*: How a virtuous love expresses itself and is instantly perceived by a kindred soul.

8. *but I saw it*: Because he believed himself to be the object of her love.

9–11. *compared to what*: Cf. Cavalcanti: "Cotanto d'umiltà donna mi pare / Che ciascun' altra in ver di lei chiamo ira."

13. *it seemed to me*: She spoke not with words but by her expressions, as one communicates in Paradise.

14. *Who takes away*: What shadow stands between them?

124 SONNET

Illustrating the fragile nature of his illusions in the preceding sonnet, this finds his hope slipping from his grasp.

4. *reached the other shore*: Who have died.

6. *of any comfort*: Of the solace that comes from being near her.
foolish mind: Lacking foresight.

9. *the sweet days*: His golden age.

11. *half of my course*: He has passed the midpoint of his life (referred to as far back as poem 54). The equivocal rhymes *volta-volta* in lines 2 and 3 create a mirroring effect.

12. *made of diamond*: Cf. 30.24 and 51.9.
but of glass: Like a mirror he holds up to himself. Cf. 105.15.

14. *split down the middle*: Disconnect or become regressive because of their inherent weakness.

125 CANZONE

Once more she veils herself against him. In the first part of this canzone, language seems to bind itself, denying itself eloquence; but toward the end, as Petrarch turns his thoughts away from his "untuned" feelings to the green shore that has always been his friend, a loosening and flow return to his verse. The poem acts as a prologue to the one to follow, like a rough stone compared with the brilliance he subsequently achieves. The poetry is packed with consonants and with *S*-impure words that structurally imply denial.

2. *sharp and constant*: The pain of his amorous thought is like the continual presence of an arrow in his side. Cf. Dante, *Rime*, "Così nel mio parlar."

3. *in the right color*: In a poetic mode suited to his feelings.

6. *where he sleeps*: In her heart.

11. *stands there*: As if apart. The standing figure contrasts with the seated maiden in line 21.

12. *no trace*: *Dramma*, as in every dram of his blood. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXX, 46–47: "Not one drop of blood / is left inside my veins that does not throb," an image taken from Virgil.

13. *flame and fire*: Purifying in nature.

19. *natural goodness*: The surface harshness of his canzone will conceal the simple truth at its heart.

21. *sits beneath their shade*: Love in her heart is shaded by her lowered brow.

26. *for it is crude*: Unpracticed, unlovely. *Scaltro*, which appears only once, is a word containing its own opposite.

29. *no other arms*: No defense but love poems.

30. *come and break*: *Squadre*, breaking into four pieces. The word also has the figurative sense of examining a thing very carefully from all angles.

31. *heart . . . that's stone*: Cf. Dante, *Rime*, "Così nel mio parlar," and *Inferno* VI, 18. Unexpressed grief pools in the heart and petrifies.

34–35. *paints . . . / and talks*: His soul conversing with his memory.

37. *untuned*: Unable now to express his thoughts openly, he is "distempered." Ice and fire are at odds in his heart. Cf. 73.7–15.

41. *tongue untied*: In the last stanza his verse was congested with rough words like *scaltro*, *squadre*, *smalto*, *sfogarme*, *stempre*, and *scorso*. Mazzotta relates this passage to St. Augustine's theory of the inadequacy of language to express forms of desire. Cf. *Confessiones* I, 7, 2.

43–44. *leads me / to speak*: His need is stronger than the obstacles he himself creates with his rough words.

47. *in her face alone*: If all she cares for is her surface beauty. Cf. poem 45, where he makes the face of his loved one a metaphor for narcissistic art. In his *Summa Theologica* St. Thomas Aquinas made the distinction between "perfectio prima" and "perfectio secunda" that may apply here, creating a dynamic between art for art's sake and its moral purpose.

49. *you, green shore*: His taking-off point, the verge of the imagination.

54. *never touched the earth*: Never brought earth or flesh to life in such a manner.

55. *marked by hers*: Cf. poem 110, where he saw her shadow stamped on the earth.

60. *lovely footprints still*: Some new earthly traces.

63. *where it could rest*: In some poetic Eden fed by clear, peaceful waters. The expression *acquetarsi*, with its roots in water, is suggestive of the first line of poem 126. Cf. also *pacificato*, 114.13.

67. *sweet brightness*: Along the "green shore."

68. *That lovely light*: *Vago lume*; here *vago* takes its coloration from light. In line 64

("vague and unsure"), *vaga* is colored by *dubbiosa.*

once struck: The word is meant to wound.

70–71. *roots / in that same ground*: In Latin the word for "root" (*radix, radice*) is related to "foot" (*pes, pedis*), whose traces he seeks in this landscape. The memory of Laura seated—whether real or imagined—connects him with a lost paradise.

73. *and sometimes made a seat*: Sometimes reigned.

75. *no part is lost*: Because he reproduces her in grass, flowers, bank, and river.

76. *would be worse*: Alluding to original sin. He bends to the mystery.

79–81. *O my poor little thing . . .*: The congedo apologizes for the unpolished verse preceding, as if to a songbird whose wings do not have power enough to soar up and out of the tangled underbrush of the woods. In this manner he looks ahead to poem 126.

126 CANZONE

One of the most admired works of Petrarch, this canzone brings the figure of Laura into vivid focus against the background of his memory. Although nearly following the rhyme scheme of poem 125 (the congedo differs slightly), its movement and sound are very different, creating a soft and amorous, at times mournfully sighing effect. Wilkins dates this poem and 125 from Petrarch's residence in Vaucluse between 1337 and 1341. The canzoni to follow, poems 127–129, he dates to the years 1343–45.

3. *rest her lovely body*: Although in line 7 she is fully dressed, early commentators argued over whether she first appears naked in the waters. Castelvetro (1582) thought modesty would forbid this; Carducci (1899) disagreed. The naked Laura appears as Diana in 23.147–151.

4. *kind branch*: The laurel. Its branches are low enough for her to lean against, and "kind" for having supported her.

5. *(I sigh . . .)*: Parenthetical exclamations like this appear in the first four stanzas (see lines 15, 33, and 41).

7. *her gown*: Cf. 23.34; see also 28.41, referring to *santissimo Elicona.*

11. *opened my heart*: Cf. 23.73, "m'aperse il petto."

14. *If it . . .*: If fate and the wheeling heavens determine that he should die without having received her mercy.

17. *let grace*: By the merciful intervention of some other power.

18. *among you*: In this natural scene where Laura opened his heart.

19. *return to its home*: To heaven unclothed by the body.

24. *more secluded port*: Note the equivocal rhyme in lines 22 and 24. The word *porto* corresponds to *seno* in the first stanza and *lembo* in line 46; that is, it suggests the womb as well as the limits of mother earth.

26. *flee from*: The soul might otherwise linger, reluctant to leave the body in an unloved place.

27. *And there will come a time*: The tense changes to a present future. Time past and future are omnipresent in this canzone.

28. *well-known place*: The word *soggiorno* (place) suggests pleasure and repose. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* VII, 45.

29. *the lovely animal . . . tamed*: Cf. 23.149: "fera bella et cruda," and 112.8: "or mansueta or disdegnosa et fera."

32. *she turns her eyes*: Cf. 106.8, where the "sweetest light came spreading from her eyes."

38. *force open*: Her prayers on behalf of this sinner might reverse heaven's judgment against him. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* II, 94–96.

39. *her lovely veil*: As spring draws her veil across the mourning earth. An abrupt transition follows these words. Cf. 125.49, when just a word or two was sufficient to turn his mind away from the gathering shadows.

42. *flowers in a rain*: Heavenly praises.

43. *sitting there*: Cf. the past absolute tense of lines 4–9. Here he changes to the imperfect, which flows forth from the past.

45. *now covered*: Some sense of covering appears in each stanza (see lines 8, 18, and 58 for the words *ricoverse*, *ricopra*, and *carico*). The congedo may provide an explanation with its reference to *ornamenti.*

love's bloom: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXX, 28, where Beatrice is seen "within a nebula of flowers."

46. *on her lap*: *Lembo* signifies margin but also the distance one must go before returning to the womb, or to a merciful God.

47. *on her blond curls*: Hair now flowing free rather than braided. She appears to be freshly created, with the voluptuousness of youth.

48. *like pearls*: Cf. 325.80, "she was pure pearl enclosed in finest gold."

51. *lovelike wandering*: Intimations of mortality with the spiral movement of that last circling bloom.

52. *Here Love reigns*: These words make a sigh like all the world adoring.

58. *filled me with forgetfulness*: He was able for a time to transcend travail. Cf. 189.1, "colma d'oblio."

60. *from the true image*: As in poem 119, the essence of Laura, her truth, has become obscured by the dazzling reality of her presence.

62. *how and when . . .*: As if shaking himself awake. Cf. *Purgatorio* XXXII, 1–3, where Dante is bereft of every other sense but sight when Beatrice reveals herself.

63. *not where I was*: In a post-lapsarian Eden.

65. *this bank of grass*: The green bank of poem 125 where grows the "lovely branch."

66–68. *If you . . .*: Petrarch speaks to his canzone as he did in poem 125, having adorned her now with a beauty "worthy" of mankind.

67. *with boldness*: Generated by the "flame of love." Cf. 125.1–3.

127 CANZONE

The glorious image of Laura in poem 126 rules the poet's heart so that its effects are multiplied wherever he goes, near or far. Similar in theme to poem 37, marking another period of separation from Laura, this canzone transforms emotional pain into joy. A numerical base seems to be at work from stanza to stanza, beginning with one-in-a-thousand and progressing to the thousand-in-one of the last stanza.

1. *In that direction*: Toward Laura, the "one lady" of line 14. (*Quella parte* becomes the plural *quante parti* in line 89.)

4. *shall be last . . . first?*: Cf. 23.30.

5. *The one*: Love.

6. *he dictates with confusion*: As if thoughts (verses) pressed on Love in their haste to be expressed.

7. *I shall tell the story*: He begins a kind of summation.

12–14. *I say that . . .*: The argument of the canzone is stated in these lines, transfigured by metaphor in stanza 7, and reconnected with his pain in the congedo, like a musical composition.

16. *greatest good of mine*: This desire to recreate the divine Laura.

17. *painful*: His martyrdom.

19. *in youthful guise*: In springtime.

22. *now a lady*: The mature *donna* who has dominion over him.

23. *once the sun has risen*: When it is high in the sky, as in summer.

25. *flame of love . . . high in the heart*: When love is most consuming.

27. *step by step retreating*: Following the summer solstice the sun sets earlier each day, depriving the day of warmth so that it "laments."

28. *reached her perfect days*: In fall, in a state of equilibrium or maturity, but also in a culminating sense, so that decline must follow.

29. *When I gaze*: He turns away mentally from winter and recalls spring, beginning the cycle over. Four seasons become three.

31. *the better stars*: The planets that rule in spring.

32. *the green and violets*: Green for hope of fulfillment and purple for purity and sacrifice.

33–34. *Love . . . / was armed*: The hope, purity, and spirit of sacrifice revealed to him by Laura.

35. *tender bark*: Her outer aspect, the sublime covering that transports her soul through life.

41. *flowered . . . grew beyond*: Bloomed and seeded herself.

42. *sole cause*: Her body mirrors the beauty of her soul.
all my woes: His struggle to reflect that beauty.

44. *snow struck by the sun*: Cf. 30.31–39. Here, hills replace the alpine mountain, and the snow covering is light and *tenera*.

45. *the way sun does on snow*: It quickly melts him to tears.

46. *more fair than human*: More than humanly beautiful.

47. *which from afar*: The closer he comes to her, the more aware he is of her mystery.

49. *between the white and golden*: Of snow and sun, face and hair, corresponding to distance and nearness.

50–51. *which no eye / has ever seen*: Cf. Paul, I Cor. 2:9, "Neque oculis vidit, neque auris audivit, neque in cor hominis ascendit."

54–55. *forgetfulness / means nothing*: Cf. 126.56.

55. *becomes eternal*: Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, 94–105.

57–70. *I've never seen . . .*: This stanza makes three analogies with Laura, "three lovely excellences."

58. *the wandering stars . . . air*: Planets which become visible as the rain clouds retreat in the night sky.

59. *between the dew and frost*: In autumn, when dew freezes between morning and evening.

62. *shadowed by a lovely veil*: Cf. poems 11, 38, 52, 59, 72.55–56, and 126.39.

63. *on that day the sky*: The day of his first encounter with her.

67. *the light . . . approaching*: Laura, the sun.

70. *all in darkness*: The gathering shadows not only are a premonition of death but also suggestive of a dark age in history when Christ's presence is not felt.

71. *and some vermilion*: The Latin double diminutive of the word "worm," close to putrefaction according to the OED; synonymous with "cochineal." Cf. Isa. 1:18.

73. *fresh by virgin hands*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* XI, 68: "Qualem virgineo demessum pollice florem." Or like the flowers gathered by the maiden Proserpina, shadowing loss and ruin. These colors compare with the violet and green of stanza 4.

75–76. *far excels . . . / . . . it gathers*: She is more than the sum of her parts.

76. *those three*: Her hair, cheeks, and bosom, whose colors surpass the white and vermilion flowers and the gold of the vase.

80. *slightest breeze*: L'òra suggests time, since *l'ora* means "hour." Cf. St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* V, 16–17: "The Spirit is a gift eternally, but has been given in time."

83. *free in the breeze*: Untied. Cf. 29.3 and 121.4

84. *burn so quick*: Cf. line 25.

85–87. *count . . . / the stars . . . enclose / the sea*: These two examples were drawn from St. Augustine's *De Trinitate* (Castelvetro). The all-in-one figure appears in Rom. 5:5–21, where Paul invests in one man, Jesus Christ, all evidence of the grace of God.

87. *strange thought*: In the sense of new, unique.

90. *remaining one*: Like the sun she gives light without depleting herself, renewing herself perpetually through time.

93. *closed in my steps*: Made him part of her. Cf. Wis. of Sol. 7:26–27; Ps. 138.2–13; St. Augustine, *Confessiones* I, 2–4, VII, 16–19, and X, 33–38 (Durling).

99. *all I say is nothing*: Cf. lines 54–55: "so that forgetfulness / means nothing."

100. *hides in me*: About which he remains silent, although all he has said before flows from it.

105. *absence of my heart*: Possessed by love.

106. *stay of death*: By writing of her beautiful effects.

128 CANZONE

In this famous political poem Petrarch pleas with the warring factions in Italy to come to peaceful terms, addressing himself to proud and jealous princes who, in the pursuit of short-term gains, have lost sight of the Roman ideal of civic virtue. Scholars date the canzone's composition to 1344 or early 1345 at Parma, during a war between the d'Este and Gonzaga families (the latter aligned with the Viscontis) in which Bavarian mercenaries were employed.

3. *your lovely body*: As biblical writings personify Israel. The mortal wounds are those of Italy's fallen, from which blood continually pours. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* VII, 95.

4. *for my sighs to be one*: That Petrarch considered this political poem of great significance is confirmed by its language and metaphor, utilizing that of the canzoni surrounding it to very different effect.

7. *Ruler of Heaven*: The poet mixes the classical invocation with the Christian, as Dante did in *Purgatorio* VI, 118: "O Jove Supreme, crucified here on earth for all mankind."

9. *holy land*: Italy, seat of the Holy Roman Church.

10. *gracious Lord*: Christ.

11. *trivial reasons*: Indicating the noblemen's willingness to fight over the slightest offense, even a woman (Zingarelli).

12. *enclosed and hardened*: Concerned only with their local affairs, heedless of a wider moral context.

17. *You*: Petrarch turns his discourse directly to the warring lords, whose power came from Fortune rather than merit.

20. *swords of strangers*: Of mercenary troops.

22. *barbaric blood*: This sarcastic image carries with it disgust for the desecration of Italy's carefully tilled soil; it also implies that anyone who thinks mercenaries would spill their blood for Italy is naive.

23. *Flattered*: The noblemen delude themselves.

25. *venal hearts*: Cf. Lucan, *Pharsalia* X, 408: "Nulla fides pietasque viris qui castra sequuntur Venalesque manus; ibi fas ubi maxima merces."

26. *with more followers*: You cannot buy loyalty from mercenaries who look for an opportunity to betray you.

28. *O deluge*: This invasion of a hostile tribe from Germany.

31. *by our very hands*: By personally inviting the hoards into their lands.

34–35. *screen / of Alps*: A natural defense.

35. *German rage*: Cf. 28.50. Petrarch shared this opinion with many, Pliny and Cicero included.

38. *healthy body sick*: With the passage of the Germans through the Alps, disease entered the body of Italy.

39. *same cage*: Sheep and wolves together.

44–48. *whose sides* . . .: Marius was the Roman consul who defeated the Cimbri and Teutons in the battle of Aquae Sextiae in 102 B.C., on what came to be called the "putrid fields" for the blood that was shed there.

45. *so split open*: Spilling not only their blood but their entrails. More than 100,000 soldiers were said to have been killed.

48. *as water from the river*: The river is the Arc, where Marius was reported to have refreshed himself after the battle. The waters of the region were normally taken for their medicinal qualities.

49. *will not speak of Caesar*: Whose reputation for violently subjugating peoples needed no further advertisement.

52. *who knows*: He mocks those who blame Heaven for their misfortunes.

54. *thanks to you*: The lords and princes.

56. *fairest part*: Another allusion to the body of Italy, which contains within it the sacred womb of Rome.

57. *What fault*: The question is posed ironically to those who might attribute to God or destiny acts that are clearly willed by proud and capricious men.

59. *scattered fortunes*: Petrarch refers to the vengeful manner in which one city-state continues to harass another defeated one, as Venice did Genoa, for example.

67. *into a game*: That mercenaries are not serious soldiers is demonstrated by their raising the finger, a gesture of facile surrender that mocks the war.

68. *The shame*: Of surrender, which makes a laughing stock of the lords who pay them.

70. *other anger*: Although the mercenaries fight ingloriously, the Italians are worse, since pride drives them to bloody internecine battle.

71. *dawn to tierce*: From six to nine in the morning, when the mind is clear—coincidentally the time Christ died, according to the Vulgate. Cf. 3.1 and note.

77. *a name that is so empty*: That is, lacking moral purpose, fighting without a standard.

78–79. *savage race / conquer our intellect*: Ultimately insinuate itself into the Latin mind. With this he sums up his argument, focusing on Italy as an Eden threatened by the serpent of divisiveness.

81–86. *Is this not . . .*: He invites each man to speak in his own voice as an Italian, asking himself these questions.

88. *look with pity*: Look outside themselves. Cf. 53.57.

91. *to you for hope*: To their expectations of an afterlife. If the noblemen have despaired of salvation, the people are doomed.

100. *here, but think*: Life, appearing to be a given to the thoughtless, is time running out to the virtuous man.

102. *perilous pass*: Judgment.

107. *more worthy act*: More civilized, using their skill and intelligence toward honorable goals.

114. *with courtesy*: He uses "courtesy" here in its courtly sense of sophisticated; that is, irony is used as a means of disarming the nobility.

117. *most vicious*: The hatred they turn on each other. Behind this incendiary anger hovers the tribal rage of the Germans, poised to descend.

120. *valiant few*: Those whose intelligence allows them to perceive the very real danger they face.

121. *Who will protect me*: A feminine voice, the ultimate cry of "fair Italy" for pity.

129 CANZONE

This poem is a meditation in which the poet puts poems 125–128 in a wholly new context and confronts his dilemma. The canzone was believed to have been written in 1344 after the completion of his diplomatic journey to Naples, during a particularly fertile period at Selvapiana. In the opinion of DeSanctis, this and poem 126 were the two most profound canzoni of the Middle Ages.

1. *From thought to thought*: Only in solitude, with his whole attention fixed on his soul's upreaching flame of desire, can he find refuge. Lanyi has noted that the word "thought" appears in each stanza in a descending scale, appearing for the last time in the last line of the fifth stanza.

2. *Love leads me on*: The loving thought that presses on him to seek her in ever more lofty regions.

5. *between two peaks*: His thoughts descend to the level of a valley on the slope of the mountain. *Poggi* are a grade below mountains peaks.

6. *that is the place*: He is drawn to the eternal valley, the green bank where his roots are and where the woods offer him shade.

9–13. *and my face . . .*: His verse reflects the changing nature of his thoughts. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 733: "Hinc metuunt cupiuntque, dolente gaudentque."

12. *the man who knows*: The lover (*uom experto*), one who has been tested.

13. *state is uncertain*: He will make this observation in each stanza to follow.

14. *high mountains*: His eyes move back up again to the alpine peaks.

harsh woods: Farthest from habitation and cultivation, where progress is most difficult.

16. *a mortal enemy*: Enemy of the intellect; inimical to inspiration.

22. *I say*: He says aloud (later he speaks inwardly).

saving you: The cause of Love is better served by his bittersweet life.

24. *loathsome*: *Vile*, a word that suggests a servile state.

25–26. *Then to another thought . . .*: Questioning the simple faith expressed in lines 22–24 with these old doubts.

28. *first stone seen*: Recasting Laura's image in this stone.

31. *softened with pity*: Perhaps out of compassion for her abandonment.

32. *What have you come to?*: Cf. 23.30. These questions give the effect of stopping him in his tracks in self-blame and then resuming in a spirit of hope.

34. *on the first thought*: He fixes his mind on the *amoroso pensiero*, which came before all else.

38. *I see her*: Cf. 127.89–90.

40. *who'll believe me?*: This question defends the truth of the workings of his imagination (Zingarelli).

41–45. *clear water . . . green grass . . .*: He will call all of these illusions into account. They differ from the images of poem 127 in being disconnected fragments—intentionally banal according to the poet Alfieri, who called them a sham (*posticcio*).

42. *beech tree*: Cf. 23.117.

46–47. *The wilder . . . / the more*: By contrast between his vision of peace and reality.

50. *that sweet mistake*: Naivete.

51. *cold as dead stone*: Mute because he is without hope or ardor.

living rock: The heart-stone of Italy whose fires are banked against the assaults of a cruel history. Cf. 50.78 and Ovid, *Heroides* X, 49–50.

53. *that mountain*: The highest of all.

54. *freest path*: The word *giogo* (path) here means the approach to the mountain, those shoulders that provide a pass to the summit. It alludes to the approach to Calvary.

56–57. *measure with my eyes / my losses*: Also, to tally up his reserves.

58. *painful cloud*: A pejorative term for veil. Cf. poem 66.

60. *air*: Like the heavy air of 66.1 or the distance he needed to travel in 37.41–48.

61. *always so near*: Cf. line 36, "I feel Love so close by."

62. *Then softly*: Cf. line 22. He speaks to himself humbly, as if in prayer.

63. *Perhaps out there*: "In that direction"—toward Laura.

65. *begins to breathe*: Hope is renewed in this loving thought and balance restored with an intake of breath.

66. *My song*: The congedo finds him on this side of the Alps, anticipating the day he will return to Laura. He neither sends the song ahead nor invites it to stay behind. It stands on its own merits.

beyond those Alps: In Provence or Italy, wherever he imagines her to be.

69–70. *aura / distilling*: The spring breeze that collects and concentrates the essence of flowers.

70. *fragrant laurel*: He uses the word *laureto*, a whole grove of blooming laurels, a symbol of the Virgin Mary.

72. *ghost of me*: Not only his body—the mortal rind—but his verse remains behind, an image of his soul.

130 SONNET

According to Wilkins, this sonnet was written at Selvapiana in the same period as poems 127–129, and the four following in this cycle of five at Vaucluse at some later time.

1. *road to mercy*: To grace.

3. *what fate*: This is the first time Petrarch uses the word *fato*.

4. *reward*: The chivalrous *guidardon* comes from the German *widarlon*, meaning remuneration.

10. *Zeuxis, Praxiteles, or Phidias*: Greek artists of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., compared here with Love.

12. *What Scythia or Numidia*: Scythia being in remote Central Asia, Numidia in the deserts of Africa.

can protect me: Where can he hide?

13. *unworthy exile*: From the sight of Laura.

13–14. *filled . . . / Envy*: *Sazia*, sated. Petrarch may allude here to Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II, 708–803, where the beast Envy, who feeds on snakes, is sent by Minerva to seek out and punish the disobedient Aglauros. Cf. also St. Jerome: "O multiplices et ineffabile insidiae diaboli, sic quoque me latitantem invenit invidia" (Carducci).

131 SONNET

This sonnet is intended to charm while containing a bitter, fierce message.

1. *so differently*: The usual "new" or "strange" way, here, perhaps, almost barbaric. See 134.9–14.

2. *draw by force*: Seduce her with the persuasive voice of Love.

hard side: The side of the heart, which is impervious to Love's arrow.

4. *deep desires*: *Alti desiri*. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* III, 22; IV, 1; IX, 50; and *Purgatorio* XVI, 64.

5. *face change often*: A conceit often used to describe the face of his own verse.

6. *eyes becoming wet*: Expressing their own grief and pain, a wish that carries a note of vendetta.

7. *repents too late*: After the lover has turned away in despair from her she turns toward him with renewed compassion. He repeats this idea in line 14 of the next sonnet.

9. *deep red roses*: Her lips bloodred (vermilion). Cf. 127.71.

in the snow: Of her skin.

10. *moved by the breeze*: Again he uses *l'òra*, connoting movement in time. Cf. 127.80.

ivory uncovered: Her teeth revealed in a smile, according to Tassoni, her hands, according to Castelvetro.

11. *turns to marble*: Like the smile of Medusa that turns men to stone. He may also allude to the fate of Aglauros in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; she was turned to cold, black marble by Mercury.

14. *season more mature*: More ready for harvest.

132 Sonnet

A discourse about his love using logic notable for its circularity. Sibilants are audible in his interrogatives and summations.

2. *by God, what*: Created by God, and therefore representing His will.

3–4. *If good . . . / If bad*: Corresponding to the *quid* and *quale* of dialectic.

5. *If I burn*: If he wishes this bittersweetness on himself, why not take in it what pleasure he can?

6. *if against*: If it is God's will, on the other hand, so be it.

7–8. *O living death . . .*: This synthesis seems to ask why, if he accepts life and death for what they are, should he not rule himself? "Why not" (*quidnis*) was the question the serpent asked Eve.

10. *Caught in contrasting winds*: He illustrates the fragility of his argument in this metaphor. As a means of support it can easily be upturned, like a point of dialectic weighted to one side.

14. *shiver*: When he turns the full force of his love on her, her cold glance freezes him; when he turns away from love, the memory of her smile keeps him in bondage (Castelvetro).

133 Sonnet

The arguments of poem 132 are given in another form.

1. *target for his arrows*: Love has singled him out, making him susceptible to her divine qualities.

2–3. *like snow . . . wax . . . / . . . mist*: Transforming nature by the agency of another.

3. *I'm hoarse*: *Roco*, describing his verse.

5. *mortal blow*: Cf. poem 2: "quando 'l colpo mortal là giù discese."

7. *you take it lightly*: She laughs.

8. *make me such*: Snow, wax, mist; that is, they make him a testimony to her effects.

9–10. *Your thoughts . . .*: She both wounds and heals him, then steals him away with her desire.

11. *he melts me*: Cf. Job 42:6.

13. *cannot resist*: Losing the sense of himself, giving himself up to her.

14. *compose the aura*: The aura concentrates the essence of all these effects.

134 SONNET

This sonnet presents a series of contrary effects and paradoxes, like a riddle. The rhyme scheme mirrors the antithetical syntax.

2. *fear and hope*: In opposition—fear with freezing, hope with burning.

3. *I fly above*: Cf. Ps. 139:8.

5. *One keeps me*: Laura, who does not care (133.4). Cf. Ps. 139.10.

7. *does not kill . . . chains*: Does not end his martyrdom. An alternate reading of *mi sferra* is to pull the arrow from the wound (Zingarelli).

8. *lifeless*: Cf. Ps. 139.11.

9. *I see with no eyes*: Like a creature not completely formed in God's mind. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXI, 10–11.

without a tongue: Without an intelligible language. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXI, 67–69.

11. *I hate myself*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXI, 76: "His words accuse him." The last words of Psalm 139, echoed in this sonnet and in Dante's passage, deal with hatred.

135 CANZONE

This canzone takes the form of a confessional, the presence of sin sometimes stated, sometimes revealed through metaphor. Its unique rhyme scheme does not break down into the usual subdivision after the first part but strengthens the A and B rhymes at the center, renewing itself at the end of the stanza with the beginning rhyme, in a cycle like that of the phoenix (the canzone's opening image). Zingarelli described this stanza form as a set of manacles; the poet seems to free himself from each one until the end of the poem when he reveals the extent of his submission to them. Whatever atonement he achieves by way of his confession prepares the way for the sonnets to follow.

1–2. *wondrous / thing*: Six wonders of nature appear in the poem, suggesting a correlation with poems 23 and 323.

2. *any foreign land*: Cf. 130.12. Here he searches the four corners of the earth, the sky, and the far beyond for his metaphors—six points.

5. *where the day is born*: In the East. According to Ovid the phoenix sprang from Assyria (*Metamorphoses* XV, 392).

7–8. *that voluntarily / dies*: The phoenix nests in the highest branches of the palm, surrounds herself with fragrant and combustible things, and invites the sun to ignite her. From the flames of this pyre she is reborn every 509 years.

16. *a stone so bold*: Ptolemy, Albertus Magnus, and Pliny wrote about these magnetstones (calamites), warning of the danger of sailing close to them. A calamite is "fiery" because of its reputedly rusty color but also because the poet puns on his own name Petrarca, the audacious one, hoisted on his own petard.

19. *steals it from the wood*: The very nails of the ship are extracted.

20. *I prove this*: By washing against her cold harshness with the waves of his verse.

23. *life must sink*: Shipwrecked.

29. *drawn to the shore*: Close to death.

32. *there lives an animal more tame and gentle*: Said to be the catoblepas (from the Greek words meaning to "look downward"), a fabled African beast resembling a buffalo whose head was so heavy it could not lift it and whose glance was fatal. Pliny described it in *Historia naturalis*. Petrarch softens the savageness of the beast to make the comparison with Laura.

35. *turns his sight*: In order to meet the eyes of the catoblepas, he would have to bend down and gaze up at her from below.

36. *with great care*: From a secure position, quick to avert one's eyes.

38. *all other parts are safe*: Looking at her hunched-over, suffering body will not harm one, only gazing into her weeping eyes.

45. *angelic beast of innocence*: Laura is made to suffer in this stanza for a crime she has not committed; as in poem 128 ("Italia mia") the maiden is undefended.

47. *a fountain*: Cf. Pliny, *Historia naturalis* II, 106: "In Troglodytis fons solis appellatur, dulcis." *Dal sole* is the name of the fountain.

48. *by its nature*: Without benefit of its own fire. He will compare this burning with the reflected light of the moon in lines 52–60.

50. *grows cold depending*: The fountain's cooling is a metaphor for the moon's setting.

51. *grows more near*: In the evening as the sun sets.

56. *and night is dark for them*: A double darkness that anticipates death.

57. *I burn then*: As the moon seems to burn and consume itself in the night sky.

58. *rays from that live sun*: Whereas during the day, when his light is nearly eclipsed by Laura's brilliance, he becomes afraid. He describes the effects of envy and sloth in this passage.

61. *fount in Epirus*: Epirus in NW Greece was the site of a shrine to Zeus. Cf. Pliny, *Historia naturalis* II, 106: "In Dodone Iovis fons, quum sit gelidus et immersas faces extinguat, si extinctae admoveantur accendit."

65–66. *My soul* . . .: He likens his soul to an unlit torch at the time that he first saw Laura.

67. *by merely coming close*: According to the terms he has set out for this canzone, he's not only approaching Laura but the shrine of Zeus, a god quick to anger.

69. *caught fire*: The flames of love describe righteous indignation, the subject of line 75.

73. *virtue fair and frozen*: The condition of virtue unignited in the hearts of men, as well as the coldness of Laura.

75. *I feel it*: His indignation comes from the heart rather than the head. Cf. *Inferno* VIII, 43–45, where Virgil praises Dante's just anger.

76. *Far out beyond*: The sixth point, beyond the straits of Gibraltar to the legendary

Canary Islands. According to the *Voyage of St. Brendan* they were the site of Eden, but to Dante, a destination forbidden man to go. Cf. *Inferno* XXVI, 106–109.

79. *dies laughing*: Having drunk too deeply from the joys of love. Tasso in *Gerusalemme Liberata* made the Canary Islands the site of the enchantress Armida's garden and the source of laughter (XV, 57).

he revives: One drinks from the first fountain, dies laughing, and then is brought back to life by drinking from the second. Ariosto's version of the second in *Orlando Furioso* was the mountain of reason.

83. *were it not tempered*: She gives him the power to unify and to make harmonious these contrary elements.

85. *shades of fame*: Now hidden, later revealed.

87. *fullest at the time*: On the day of Christ's crucifixion.

92. *great stone*: The mountain that overlooks Vaucluse.

96. *the one destroying him*: The image of "virtue fair and frozen."

97. *he flees*: Cf. 28.106–114. In his solitary refuge not far from Avignon he sifts out her harsh meanings, her image always before him. *Sasso* ("stone," line 92) is also a figurative expression for the tomb and in Provençal can mean "filter" or "sieve," a means of purification.

136 SONNET

Having covertly confessed himself in poem 135, he emerges from his closed valley with three sonnets attacking the corrupt papal court in the most overt terms. The precise target of Petrarch's attacks is disputed, but the general object of his scorn was the French court in the period preceding his departure from Provence in 1353. Wilkins dates the sonnets 1345–47. Poems 136, 137, and 138 reportedly were placed on the church's Index of Forbidden Books from 1564–1722.

1. *May Heaven's fire*: Invoking divine wrath against the whore of Babylon of the Apocalypse, in this instance the papal court at Avignon. Cf. Rev. 17:15; Dante, *Inferno* XIX, 107, and *Purgatorio* XXXII, 149.

tresses: Cf. 29.3 and 121.4 for the word *treccie*.

3. *streams and acorns*: Christ and the Apostles drank from the stream and ate what food lay at hand.

4. *got fat and rich by starving other people*: Having abandoned their vows of poverty, the papacy became enormously rich by skimming the cream from the feudal system.

6. *all evil*: The pope and his cardinals dominated the social and political as well as the religious affairs of the western world.

7. *slave of wine*: Petrarch wrote elsewhere that the court's love for French wine was a major stumbling block to returning the papacy to Rome.

9. *In all your rooms*: Not excepting even the pope's chamber.

older men: The cardinals, aging members of the Curia.

10. *romping round*: As in a rustic peasant dance (the tresca) with broadly suggestive movements. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* X, 65.

11. *bellows*: As in the *Dance of Death* by Holbein (Carducci).

12. *raised on cushions*: Like sultans, that is, infidels.

13. *naked . . . in thorns*: Zingarelli recalls a fresco of Giotto showing Poverty in a shirt, walking among thorns.

137 SONNET

He continues his attack on the papal court in less angry, more acid terms.

1. *so filled the sack*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* VI, 50, "La tua città ch'è piena / d' invidia sì che già trabocca il sacco."

4. *Venus and Bacchus*: Exclusive worship of whom leads to debauchery.

instead of Jove and Pallas: Pallas is Minerva, goddess of wisdom, Jove the god of justice.

6–8. *but I see*: Lines that have not yet been deciphered, particularly the identity of the "new sultan." Carducci believed that Petrarch speaks figuratively of a complete takeover of the papacy, with a new pope chosen from the Colonna family. Or Petrarch predicts half-seriously a complete takeover of the papacy by infidel forces, beginning with a Muslim caliph as pope.

8. *into one seat*: Uniting empire and papacy under one rule.

Baghdad: Like Rome, Baghdad was brought low when the caliphate was moved to another city, suggesting that Petrarch means, figuratively, back to Rome, a city presently in ruins.

9. *Her idols shall be scattered*: Cf. Isa. 21:9, "Cecidit, cecidit Babylon, et omnia sculptilia deorum eius contrita sunt in terram."

10. *towers, enemies of Heaven*: As was the tower of Babel. Petrarch refers to the luxurious buildings erected by Pope Clement VI in Avignon.

12–14. *Beautiful souls . . .*: Once purified, "Baghdad" will be reborn as Rome, the new Jerusalem, founded on the traditions of the Golden Age.

138 SONNET

This sonnet calls down the wrath of God on the papacy's heresies and fraudulent practices, in particular simony, which Petrarch along with Dante considered the legacy of the Donation of Constantine.

1. *Fountain . . . dwelling place*: Favorite images of Petrarch, normally evocative of Laura.

2. *heresy's own temple*: Suggesting that the Church's idea of heresy is that which threatens the temple's wealth and power. Carducci believed that Petrarch alludes to Pope John XXII's doctrine on the Beatific Vision, wherein the sight of God was denied to the souls of the Just until the Day of Judgment and the resurrection of the body.

3. *once Rome*: Once the capital of the pagan world and hence its temple.

5. *foundry of deceit*: Cf. Boccaccio, *Decameron* I, 2.

6–8. *where the good dies . . .*: A new use of antithesis, against all reason and morality. Cf. poem 134.

9. *Founded in pure*: The early Church of the Apostles.

10. *founders . . . horns*: They defy the very principles of the original disciples with their devilish pride.

11. *brazen whore!*: This and the term "adulterers" in line 12 refer to the sins of simony, the selling of favors of the Church. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XIX, 1–4.

13. *Constantine*: Cannot undo the damage he wrought. Emperor Constantine I supposedly granted the pope and his successors spiritual and temporal supremacy over Rome, Italy, and the western regions, thereby betraying his imperial trust. Dante placed him in Paradise (XX, 55–60), separating the man from the consequences of his acts.

14. *for Hell has taken*: The exact meaning of the reference has eluded commentators because of its laconic syntax and audacity. An alternate reading of folk origin is, "Voi non siete neppur degni che la terra vi sostenga" (Carducci).

and there he stays: As a great object lesson. In Petrarch's sixth eclogue, he wrote of Constantine in the Inferno: "In aeternum gemat ille miser, pastoribus aulae qui primus mala dona dedit."

139 SONNET

This and the next two sonnets find the poet returned to his customary preoccupations, his righteous anger having subsided.

1. *wide with desire*: In the use of rhymes and in this opening line, the sonnet recalls poem 127, a canzone.

2. *O sweet flock*: He addresses the poet friends he left behind in Italy when he returned to Provence.

3. *Fortune with her birdlime*: His obligations to the hated papal state.

4. *far from you*: From his most desired goal of sharing in a meeting of minds.

6. *in that open valley*: He left his friends in the wide sunny Po valley, where he could speak freely.

7. *most wraps around*: Lending protection to the center—Italy—that nurtures his poetry.

9. *the left*: Toward the evil that is Avignon.

he . . . straight path: His heart, at least, was not forced to turn against its natural bent.

11. *he to . . . and I*: His first desire was the rebirth of Rome as the Holy City (Jerusalem). Yet he was obliged to cross over the sea, back to the pagan papal court he serves (Egypt).

14. *our togetherness is rare*: He has always been separated from his heart except for brief periods when events matched his hopes.

140 SONNET

Read within the context of the preceding four sonnets, this could be a description of his renewed submission to Church authority after a brief outburst of honest anger against the papal court. For all its disarming charm, its intent seems to be to attack his enemies in a more covert way.

3. *appears all armed*: Comes forth in his verse in words of anger.

4. *sets his banner*: Makes his mark on the poet's face as a challenge.

8. *is angry at our boldness*: Courtesy, virtue, and truth would have him ply his suit in a more pious manner.

more than she shows: Suggesting that she responded to his earlier invective with silence.

9. *Love full of fear*: This little scene has Love disarmed, reduced to quailing fear by the disapproval of Laura.

12. *What can I do*: In his role as Love's standard-bearer.

13. *stay with him*: Remain silent until death.

14. *Who loves well dying*: "Controlled by reason, shame and reverence." Petrarch first used this conceit in poem 5. Cf. also 23.31 and 59.15–17.

141 Sonnet

The last of the Babylon sonnets, this compares him to the butterfly fatally attracted to light.

2. *foolish butterfly*: The adjective *semplicetta* feigns disparagement of his verse, which is only apparently simple.

seeking the light: To find comfort within flame, or the eternal beyond the temporal.

3. *someone's eyes*: Of a large, unthinking person who brushes away the annoying insect. Here "someone" blocks the butterfly's path to light.

4. *makes the other cry*: Nonetheless he has dealt a minor injury to those eyes.

6. *so much sweetness*: The eyes are the source and the entryway of spiritual love.

8. *who discerns*: The truth behind those eyes that he has brushed against with his wings inflames him to further death-defying endeavors.

10. *I will die from it*: *Veracemente* (truthfully), as will become clear in the poems to follow.

11. *such pain*: Turned inside out, the line suggests that he no longer intends to fight against the truth of the living hell where good dies. Cf. 138.4–8.

12. *but so mellifluously*: Like the butterfly seeking sweet warmth, he will return to writing in the language of love.

13. *mourn for her wrong*: He regrets having given offense to her and bows to her greater power.

14. *my soul, blind*: Without the guidance of reason, making a descent into the region of death in the search for a new kind of truth.

142 Sestina

He returns in this sestina to his only refuge, the laurel, but in a new direction, onto "another path." More than ever he demonstrates in his rhymes multiple meanings for significant and emotionally charged terms.

2. *merciless light*: From Venus, because of the relentless ardor he felt for Laura in Avignon.

4. *snow by then*: Laura showed signs of yielding.

5. *loving aura*: The spring breeze that renews thoughts of their first encounter.

6. *grass and branches*: To lyric poetry and to the support of the virtuous immortals who inspire it.

8. *the wind moved greener leaves*: *Vento* is the wind of Juno, the force of circumstance; the leaves are a promise of hope for regeneration.

11. *shade of hills*: Cf. the *poggi* of 129.5.

12. *tree most loved*: The laurel was most valued by the gods for being pure, strong, and evergreen.

13. *from Heaven*: She has provided him with immunity to the lightning of Jove. In this case heaven is the visible universe and Jove the temporal authority.

15. *woods . . . hills*: His travels have taken him through various stages of understanding of the nature of thought. Cf. poem 129.

16. *trunk or branches*: Other sources of inspiration besides Laura. The trunk has served as a column of support, perhaps alluding to the church fathers.

17. *supernal light*: The light of the visible heavens.

18. *change their worth*: Demonstrate their fickleness.

19. *firmer all the more*: More grounded in his original faith in an everlasting source.

20. *the call I heard from Heaven*: Through his ears he received God's message, and almost simultaneously was able to see the sweet and clear light. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXXI, 13: "only by ears with eyes could it be heard."

26. *won and changed*: All the works of nature yield eventually to time.

27. *I beg the pardon*: An appeal for forgiveness to poetry in general for the departure he has taken.

29. *the sticky branches*: From which he (the caught bird) fled in poems 136–141.

30. *see the light*: The light of line 21 shining like a star within sunlight. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* VIII, 16–21.

32. *the greatest hills*: Seeking justice he attempted to scale mountains before he was ready. "Happily" implies his naivete.

34. *place and season*: A corrupt era requires a new orientation.

35. *another path*: The path of Orpheus, eventually leading through the Underworld in a winding descent.

38. *another climb to Heaven*: Some believe he shows penitence and new resolve to climb the purgatorial mountain. His turning toward an entirely new path, however, suggests he first intends to look inward, descending into the dark regions of the self.

39. *other branches*: The cross.

143 SONNET

Believed to have been written to a poet (in the *voi* form of courteous respect), this sonnet weaves themes from the poetry of Guido Guinizelli together with those of Dante from *Inferno* V.

1. *When I hear*: Cf. *Inferno* V, 100: "Love, quick to kindle in the gentle heart." This line from Dante recalls Guinizelli's "Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore," a poem Dante echoed himself in the *Vita nuova* in "Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa."

2. *inspires in his flock*: In love poets, those who follow a particular school.

4. *dead soul*: One whose fires are "spent."

5. *lovely lady present*: The very phrase "la bella donna" awakens the amorous thought in him, recalling Guinizelli's "Al cor gentil."

7. *appearing so that often*: She emerges adorned with love.

8. *but sighs*: He finds in love poetry more inspiration than comes to him from the sound of the church bell ringing for prayers.

12. *too much joy*: *Soverchio piacer*, the rule of Venus.

13. *stopping my tongue*: Her beauty so awes him. *Atraversa* (stopping), an atypical spelling, reveals the Latin word for "dark" (*atra*) and for "turning" (*versa*).

14. *what she is like inside*: To reveal what is written within requires a new language, a new topology (other leaves, light, hills, and branches, as he wrote in poem 142).

144 SONNET

He summons up his vision of the past for his friend Sennuccio del Bene, but with new effects, new colors.

1–4. *I never saw* . . .: Her face once pierced through clouds and storms like the morning star at sunrise.

3. *rainbow*: *Arco* reappears in line 12 as the drawn bow of Love.

4. *so many colors*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 700–701: "Iris croceis per coelum roscida pennis mille trahens varios adverso sole colores."

6. *flaming color changed*: Her face and his at times had paled, at times had blushed, Cf. 140.1–2.

7. *I am spare with words*: He chooses them carefully, as one who selects from a scarce supply (*nel mio dir parco*).

8. *can be compared*: A demonstration of his desire to linger over her memory is this loving comparison between Laura and the dawn of a new day.

9–11. *I saw Love* . . .: Looking at her light cast all other beauty into shadow.

12. *with his bow drawn*: Love, but also Laura/Christ.

145 SONNET

Often numbered among the anniversary poems because of its reference in line 14 to a period of fifteen years, this sonnet insists on the ineradicable fact of his flawed humanity. Its humorous tone suggests that it was directed to a fellow poet.

1. *Put me where sun can kill*: He divides the earth into five zones, the first of which is the torrid zone. Cf. Horace (*Odes* I, 22) and Virgil (*Eclogues* X, 64).

2. *can conquer him*: The sun, as in the two polar regions.

3. *mild and light*: In the temperate zones, Cancer and Capricorn.

4. *where those give him to us*: The setting Sun gives his cart and horses to the Hours while he rests during the night.

9. *in abyss*: The vastness of the sea or the deepest regions of Hell.

10. *low and swampy*: Cf. poem 66 and Dante, *Inferno* VI.

13. *I'll be*: However he may attempt to purify himself, some things never change.

14. *sigh trilustrally*: He has completed a fifteen-year period of expiation and purification. The *lustrum* in Roman times gave absolution to citizens in good standing every five years in the month of May.

146 SONNET

This sonnet is striking for its apparent simplicity, but it is composed of words whose etymological roots have traveled in many directions.

1. *O noble soul*: Laura.

glowing virtue warm: This is "Another light" emanating from her, more the patina of gold than the white light that dazzles.

2. *I line so many pages*: In order to vaunt her name. Among the many senses of the root of *vergo* is that of chastising.

3. *sole place*: *Albergo*, normally home of the soul, can also carry the sense of brothel, one of the Latin meanings of *lustrum* at the root of "trilustral" in 145.14. Cf. 138.1.

chastity lives: The Latin *onestate* is a condition in which honor, reason, and justice prevail. Its antonym is "decorum" or "adornment" (the *ornata* of line 1). When applied to a woman, its value changes because she is an adornment to the man, and her incorruptibility (chastity) must be guaranteed.

5. *O flame, O roses*: Apocalyptic language. (Alfieri noted here Petrarch's "oriental style.")

6. *living snow*: Unyielding hardness, burnished into gold. Cf. 30.37–39.

looking makes me pure: *Specchio* (looking, as if in a mirror) continues the theme of examining the self honestly. But compare poems 45, 46, and 136.11, where he speaks of the devil's mirrors.

7. *joy raising my wings*: Joy is, perhaps, the single least corruptible word in the sonnet. With the wings of imagination he soars beyond idolatry.

9. *my poems understood*: If her name, and his carefully polished words, were familiar to the people in these lands.

13–14. *that fair land . . . / ring out*: Italy, through her vernacular language.

147 SONNET

A sonnet reminiscent of poem 140, in which Petrarch assumes a submissive attitude to a stern but loving Laura.

1. *my desire*: His unruly will to be heard, to let his voice ring out.

two burning spurs: Laura's eyes.

2. *hard bit*: Her disdain of him.

3. *trangresses*: Oversteps the bounds of propriety in its exuberance.

4. *gives a bit of joy*: Such as he derived from the preceding sonnet.

5. *the one*: Laura, who knows his deepest thoughts and motives.

7. *whose actions he corrects*: True Love is self-correcting. Cf. Eccles. 18:13, "Qui misericordiam habet, docet, et erudit quasi pastor gregem suum."

8. *that flashes*: The loving anger of Laura in turn pricks him like a lightning flash.

10. *angry Jove*: Challenged by his boldness.

11. *hold back great desire*: Temper and shape it, as in metallurgy or the firing of glass.

13. *transparent as is glass*: An image of pure spirit.

14. *bring back peace*: Revealing the purity of his motives.

148 Sonnet

The many sources that flow into and feed his language—the rivers and trees of many cultures—cannot dilute the intensity of his love.

1–4. *Not Tessin, Tiber*. . . : Twenty-three river names are listed, some with atypical spellings: six in Italy, six in Asia Minor and Africa, and eleven in various parts of Europe.

3–4. *sea-breaker / Rhône*: The mouth of the powerful Rhône flows out not far from Avignon and Vaucluse. Figuratively, its waters penetrate the mother sea.

5. *ivy, fir, pine* . . . : All with religious as well as literary significance. Cf. poem 10 and note. The ivy, like the laurel, is an evergreen plant, and juniper (*retem* in the Old Testament) bears fruit that purifies.

7. *fair stream*: The Sorgue.

8. *slim tree*: The laurel.

10. *where I in armor*: Guarding against error.

11. *leaps and bounds*: Exuberantly.

13. *he who planted it*: Legend has it that Petrarch himself planted a laurel on the banks of the Sorgue.

149 Ballata

This sixth of seven ballatas in the *Canzoniere* (not until poem 324 will there be another) precedes a cycle of fifty-six sonnets, the longest in the collection. Petrarch's broad hint of laughter in *aria* (l. 3) and in the "leaps" of the preceding sonnet carries over effectively into the ballata form, a song meant to be danced to.

1. *From time to time*: Times when the divine Laura has smiled upon him, brightening the face of his verse.

3. *the tone*: The music he hears in her visible beauty.

4. *appears less dark*: Less inscrutable.

5–8. *Then why* . . . : If her attitude is softening, why does he continue to express himself in the old way with the language of pain and desperation?

9–12. *If I should turn* . . . : His loving glance now seems to speak well for him, while before it availed him nothing.

13. *war is still not over*: She has given him fresh fuel for his fire.

150 SONNET

The preceding ballata changed the rules of the game, putting Love in the service of his desire. This debate between the soul and the rational faculty also turns familiar themes around so craftily that it is difficult to discern whose voice is speaking.

2. *war that's everlasting*: Eternal torment.

4. *our suffering*: The soul speaks with the authority of inner vision.

7. *Not she, but he*: Love has control of Laura's eyes and is, therefore, responsible for their effects.

8. *sees and is silent*: If her pity is not palpable.

10. *and happy*: Reflecting verse of his that appeared to be full of cheerful optimism (*lieta*), such as poem 148.

13. *stagnates there*: The painful thoughts he suppressed while he made the face of his verse "dry and happy."

14. *hopes so grand*: That she would deign to interest herself in his suffering.

151 SONNET

In a reversal of the old pattern of fleeing from Avignon to the green shore of Vaucluse, new hope draws him back to her and a different style of love.

3. *dark and turbid trouble*: His inner spiritual conflict. Cf. poem 150.

5–8. *divine light*. . .: The sky clears suddenly in a quatrain that flows with acerbic sweetness.

6. *that high ray*: Like the morning star before dawn.

7. *black and white*: Her compassionate eyes. Cf. 29.23 and 72.50.

8. *dips in gold*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 468. Love has spoken for him, changing vitriol to honey.

9. *He is not blind*: In allegorical paintings Love was often portrayed blindfolded, aiming his arrows randomly.

I see him: His vision of Love, here graphically presented, has changed from that of the mature Lord to Cupid, suggesting merry game-playing.

11. *but alive*: Not a figment of the imagination but a force independent of artifice.

13. *word by word*: Reducing the message to its simplest elements, as truth is revealed.

152 SONNET

He struggles with Laura as if she were an angelic beast whose pleasure is to toy with him.

1. *kind, wild beast*: The gentle Laura, even as her heart is fierce.

4. *spins me around*: As if on the wheel of fortune, or on the rack of torture.

my state uncertain: His fortunes can go either way.

6. *between the two*: Between yes and no, life and death.

7. *that sweet poison*: The arrows of Cupid were dipped in the venom of sexual desire.

9–11. *My frail . . .* : He summons up a picture of the wheel spinning with him gripped to it, through summer, winter, spring and fall. Line 11 in the Italian appears extraordinarily long and drawn out, like suffering.

12. *hopes by fleeing*: To take his wounded self away from love's war, to die in peace.

14. This is a truncated version of the conceit of 140.14: "Who loves well dying comes to a good end." Cf. Seneca, *De clementia* II: "Quicquam non potest qui mori non potest."

153 SONNET

Still courting his angel with the heart of a beast, he sends his verse forth to her sweetened with flattery.

1. *sighs of warmth, to her cold heart*: Full of spring thoughts, melting winter.

2. *her pity*: Her naturally receptive female nature.

6. *her fair gaze cannot reach*: This is a disputed line because it suggests Laura's limited vision. Perhaps Petrarch's pilgrim has wandered too far into the *mondo tristo* for Laura's influence to penetrate. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* II, 52.

7. *her harshness strikes us, or my star*: If his descent fails to redeem him or his art.

9. *perhaps not fully*: Modesty (the veil of Cupid) will prevent his describing in too great detail his suffering.

10. *dark and as unquiet*: Like the turbid sea in poem 151.

11. *peace and clarity*: On a higher level.

12. *Love comes with you*: His verse is suitably garbed for an audience with her, "nude" but veiled in the proper places.

14. *my own sun's signs*: She is receptive to these sweet, veiled thoughts.

154 SONNET

This sonnet seems to clear the air of turbid darkness.

3. *which Nature mirrors*: Cf. Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* I, 3: "Spiritus qui in semine continentur, et natura quae in eo spiritu est, proportione respondens elemento stellarum." Dante expands on this philosophical point in *Convivio* IV, 21.

4. *its equal*: Laura's unique beauty must have been modeled on a divine image.

6. *cannot feel safe*: Cannot resist surrendering to her beauty.

8. *raining grace*: Descending into his heart like a golden shower.

9. *The air that's struck*: A neutral air that takes her sudden and illuminating impression.

11. *our own thought . . . surpasses*: The concept of chastity (honesty) here is beyond mortal understanding, or at least beyond expression in language.

12. *no base desire*: Any less honest or virtuous response.

13–14. *Now when* . . . : The question begs comparison with Dante's Beatrice. Petrarch combines in Laura's *somma beltà* both her physical and spiritual beauty, as if he were reducing Dante's canzone "Donna ch'avete intelletto d'amore" to fourteen lines, maintaining all its elements. Dante did his own thematic reducing in the *Vita nuova* in the sonnet "Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare," eliminating any mention of "vile desire."

155 SONNET

The next four sonnets have as their common theme the weeping of Laura on the first day, Good Friday 1327.

2. *the one* . . . *the other*: Caesar, emperor, quick to wound, Jove, temporal deity, inclined to thunder in rage against enemies.

5–8. *My lady wept* . . . : Cf. Dante, *Inferno* II, 133–38.

5. *my lord wanted me*: The sight of Laura weeping struck the fatal blow of Love. The identification of the weeping lady with Mary Magdalene was common in Petrarch's day.

6. *her sorrow*: Laura gave audible expression to her grief.

8. *marrow of my bones*: Transformed him into living stone.

12. *skillful keys*: So that his memory of her, as durable and pure as diamond, may be retrieved by grief and desire at the urging of Love.

13–14. *draws forth* / . . . *sighs*: A mournful music.

14. *precious tears*: *Lagrime rare*, similar to the sparingly chosen words of 144.7.

156 SONNET

The sight of Laura weeping and the sound of her grief brought heaven and earth to a standstill.

3. *pains and pleases*: Her sorrow and pity pain him; their justness pleases him.

4. *Shadow, smoke, and dreams*: The weather has altered from the sunrise of poem 154.

5. *lights in tears*: The sorrow of Laura was that of an angel grieving for mankind.

8. *mountains move*: A reference to Orpheus, whose music enchanted and transformed the Underworld. Cf. Horace, *Odes* I, 12.9–12: "Arte materna rapidos morantem fluminum lapsus celerisque ventos, blandum et auritas fidibus canoris ducere quercus."

13. *dared move*: They were immobilized. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* II, 115–17, where the musician Casella puts the words of the poet Dante to song.

157 SONNET

This sonnet (added to Petrarch's final manuscript in 1366) again demonstrates the spell of nature's art. Laura may be real, but her beautiful qualities are perceived as a veil drawn over her essential self.

1. *so cruel*: The day of the crucifixion; secondarily, the day he was wounded by Love.

3. *no wit or style*: Cf. 154.11.

5. *Her attitude*: The words *l'atto* and *costumi* (qualities) of 156.1 both have a special function in these two poems, *l'atto* only "adorned" with pity, *costumi* a set of virtues translating into grief rather than action.

9. *Her head fine gold*: Her hair is purified gold fashioned into the finest threads, like that of an icon.

10. *eyebrows ebony*: Black as the polished heart-wood of this mysterious tree.

12. *pearls and red roses*: Her teeth and lips.
the gathered grief: The holy words expressing a collective grief.

14. *her sighs a flame*: Of consuming intensity.
crystal: Cf. 30.37, 51.10, and Dante, *Inferno* XXIII, 97–99.

158 Sonnet

The final sonnet of the four on the subject of Laura's weeping responds to the question asked in 154.14 and 155.1. Base desire *was* once and only once conquered by highest beauty, bringing peace to heaven and earth on the strength of compassion.

1. *rest or turn*: These verbs make a distinction between gazing fixedly at Laura and scanning the entire scene that reality presents. Cf. 156.1–4.

3. *I find there one*: Love, the artist; or the imagination.

7. *more than sight*: Beyond what he apparently sees.
seem to imagine: "Seem" appears also in line 5. Cf. 156.4

8. *her living voice*: His imagination is able to recreate her beautiful image by hearing again her words and their music.
holy sighs: Verses expressing profound faith.

9–11. *Love and the truth* . . . : Leopardi paraphrased: "I judged, and Love also judged, in a judgment conforming to the truth, that those beauties that I saw in my lady weeping were beauties unique in the world, never again seen on earth."

10. *unique*: Only he saw them. His heart alone was wrung.

159 Sonnet

He poses another question, in a philosophical context, to seek an explanation for Laura's qualities.

1. *from what Idea*: A reference to Plato's theory of the One Idea in the mind of God from which creation springs. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XIII, 49–87.

2. *take the model*: Matter takes the stamp of the Idea from which the creature is formed.

4. *her power up above*: To reach the highest part of the heavens for her model. At Nature's highest power, "the brilliance of the seal would shine forth full" (Dante, *Paradiso* XIII, 75).

5. *What fountain nymph . . . woodland goddess*: What naiad, what dryad.

7–8. *How did a heart*. . . : Foscolo refers to "un inimitabile chiaroscuro," the "pennellata da maestro" of these lines.

9–11. *Who seeks*. . . : Without a knowledge of her effects, which cause any man who sees her to love her, the Idea of her cannot be grasped. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XIII, 79–81: "But if the Fervent Love moves the Clear Vision / of the First Power and makes of that its seal, / the thing it stamps is perfect in all ways."

13. *the sweetness*: Cf. Horace, *Odes* I, 22, 23–24: "Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo, dulce loquentem."

160 SONNET

The One Idea shaped by Nature into a particular creature quickly breaks down into her several parts under the admiring eye of the lover. Laura here is a vision who walks and talks.

1. *full of wonderment*: Her singularity, her very existence, fills him with awe.

5. *fair heaven*: He begins in the highest regions, that part of Heaven where Nature modeled her out of God's design.

tranquil brows: Of a soul at peace with herself and the world.

6. *I trust in*: That he follows, as he would a guide.

7. *no light's left*: No other beloved created from God's image can compare with or succeed her. God has thrown away the mold.

her white breast: The vocabulary of this sonnet is unusually suggestive with its *preme*, *seno*, *cespo*, *cerchio*, *terso*, and *crespo*.

12. *unripened season*: Spring.

14. *weaving a wreath*: A garland of flowers for her hair.

161 SONNET

A lament for the eye as well as the ear (with the visually suggestive *O*'s predominating), addressed to whatever love poets may still be listening and to those already dead and gone.

1. *O useless steps*: Seeking Laura.

2. *O binding memory*: Of the first day, written in his heart by her hand. Cf. 155.11.

4. *O my eyes*: *Oi*, emphasizing pain.

5. *O leafy bough*: The laurel.

6. *dual values*: Glory and virtue. Cf. poem 119.

10. *both spurs and rein*: The form and sense of love poetry both bind and loosen him.

11. *kicking back is useless*: The language echoes Acts 9:5, "Saule, Saule, . . . durum est tibi contra stimulum calcitrare."

14. *stay awhile*: Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* VII: "O ye who travel on the road of Love, pause here and look about for any man whose grief surpasses mine." Dante was himself paraphrasing Lam. 1:12.

162 SONNET

The language of this sonnet derives from Virgil and is notable for its bucolic style, contrasting with the preceding sonnet.

1. *joyful and glad*: Two kinds of happiness, subtly shaded (*lieti* and *felici*). Laura brings out their highest beauty.

2. *walk in thought*: Cf. 160.9–14.

3. *shore*: Like the fresh green shore of poem 106, yielding to her beauty and taking her impress.

4. *conserving traces*: Cf. 125.60. Rather than scattered, hidden tracks, these are securely recorded.

5. *straight and slender*: The laurel.

6. *delicately lovely*: The second diminutive in two lines (*amorosette*), suggesting that these flowers were allowed to grow in innocence and safety.

11. *from her live light*: Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XIII, 52–57.

12. *I envy you*: The eternal countryside, which once was witness to her presence.

163 SONNET

He appeals to Love to adjust his pace, for he is weary and the path is steep.

1. *Love*: Love, like Laura when she is at peace, understands him completely. Cf. 71.23, 95.5, and 147.13.

3. *heart's deepest part*: Where his *virtu* (his soul) resides. Cf. 2.5–8.

4. *clear to you*: His soul is "transparent as glass," according to 147.13–14.

hidden to all others: About this deepest part of his heart, Laura told him to be silent in 23.74.

5. *I have suffered*: Endured in her service.

7. *unaware that I am there*: He lags behind, while Love surges (*sorgi*) ahead, unmindful of him.

9–11. *I do see . . .*: He knows the goal—Laura's loving eyes—toward which he struggles over mountains and passes.

13. *consumed with loving well*: Love is contented as long as he dies following the right path. Cf. 140.14 and note.

164 SONNET

But when night falls a different struggle begins, full of grief and anger.

3. *her car of stars*: The constellations wheeling quietly in their course.

7. *war is my state*: A conflict between the spur and the rein.

full of grief and anger: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 522–31 and 136–41, when Dido tossed on her bed with rage against Aeneas.

8. *the thought of her*: Laura as an object of contemplation pacifies him; as an achievable objective she puts him at war.

9. *clear and living font*: The source of wisdom.

11. *one hand alone*: Laura's.

13. *a thousand times a day*: Because his wound continues to be healed by forgetfulness, then reinflicted whenever he thinks of her. Cf. Bernard de Ventadorn, *Non es Meravilha*, "Cen vetz mor lo jorn de dolor / E revin de joi autras cen."

14. *from my salvation*: The end of his war, linking him with lines 1–4 and sleep.

165 Sonnet

From the darkness of the preceding sonnet with its undertone of torment, he moves forward into morning.

1. *As soon as*: Laura emerges into the clearing like the very first maiden.

3–4. *a force . . . / renews*: Cf. Venus in Hesiod, *Theogony* 194–95: "and grass grew up about her beneath her shapely feet."

6. *does not deign*: Love chooses only the worthiest for his target.

7. *fair eyes rain*: Like the shower of sweetness in 72.37–45.

9. *with her walk*: He praises Laura in motion, adding this to her other beauties.

10. *accord these words*: Move in graceful harmony.

11. *slow*: Deliberate, poised, thoughtful.

12. *those four sparks*: Her walk, look, words and gestures. Cf. 55.9.

not from them alone: Her many other attributes have been praised elsewhere, for example, in poem 157.

14. *I have become a nightbird*: Dazzled by her fourfold light. He may refer to himself as the cuckoo, a bird that appropriates other birds' nests.

166 Sonnet

This self-mocking sonnet explains why he has turned from the language of the ancients to love poetry in the vernacular. It was probably a response to an anonymous poem, using the same rhymes, beginning "voi mi negate la virtù che nunca" (Carducci). Its rhyme scheme in the tercets is called "oblique."

1. *stay in the cave*: Had not left study and contemplation to wander in exile. Before he became the sun god, Apollo was worshipped for his oracles at the shrine at Delphi on Mount Parnassus. In other writings, Vaucluse was Petrarch's *spelunca*.

3. *Florence . . . have its poet*: Its epic poet writing in the Latin language, as Petrarch had set out to be. His allusion to Florence was probably not meant to disparage Dante but to make excuses for himself, to explain why he, Petrarch the imposter, had not risen to the level of the ancients.

4. *Verona, Mantua, and Arunca*: Birthplaces of Catullus, Virgil, and Juvenal.

5. *springs with reeds*: Fresh, meaningful growth, adaptable to love, as in 50.37.

6. *another planet*: Venus.

8. *thistles and thorns*: Stunted growths from the wasteland; also burrs and prickles that annoy and stick to anyone who passes.

hooked scythe: Death's blade.

9. *The olive tree*: Sacred to Minerva.

11. *at one time*: In the age of Catullus, Juvenal, and Virgil.

12. *fault or my misfortune*: Lack of genius or the fault of the age.

13. *all good fruit*: Cf. 142.36.

14. *eternal Jove*: God.

167 SONNET

Guided by love, Laura sings, and he is transported by her divine sweetness.

1. *to the ground*: In pity.

3–4. *voice / . . . so divine*: With heavenly grace. Cf. 166.14.

6. *changed so there*: Her song has the power to alter his thoughts, redirect his desires.

7. *the final plunder*: The ultimate ravishment—death.

8. *die so well*: In a manner consonant with her song.

9. *But sound which binds*: The soul holds back in reverie, captive to that sound. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* II, 106–14.

12–13. *this way I live . . . spool of life*: Binding on the one hand his senses to her sound and on the other freeing his mind to her words, as if she were the fate Lachesis measuring out the span of his life.

14. *heaven's only siren*: In Plato's myth of Er (*Republic* X), the sirens of all the individual planets governed the harmony of the spheres, but Laura's singing combines them all in one.

168 SONNET

He grows old in his hope, still made articulate by desire.

1. *that sweet thought*: The *amoroso pensiero*. Cf. 127.99–106.

2. *a confidant of old: Secretario*, the thought he shares with Laura through the medium of her eyes. The conceit was used by Andrea Capellanus in *De amore*, where ultimately the *secretarius* (in this case Petrarch's thought) betrayed the lover in the Court of Love by citing his shortcomings.

4. *hope for now*: For a corresponding love in Laura.

5. *at times a lie*: Betraying his trust by failing at times to be precise in his wording. Laura, too, as she is identified with Love, has deceived him.

10. *the time that contradicts*: *Stagion*, the season. The mirror doesn't lie: winter is coming.

13. *does not change*: The season for burning (*etate*) is not over, nor has he lost hope that she, also aging, continues to share his love.

14. *I do fear*: His fear a self-corrective that holds the secret thought in sight.

169 SONNET

Laura, love's enemy, appears here armed with sighs. The sonnet disturbed early commentators for its departures from the usual courtly protocol.

2. *go the world alone*: Strike out in a completely new direction where no poet has gone before.
4. *whom I should flee*: The vengeful side of Laura.
5. *so sweet and hard*: She reflects the pitilessness the poet is resolved to explore in the same way that he explored her beauty.
7. *army of armed sighs*: *Stuolo* (army) appears only once in the *Canzoniere*.
8. *Love's enemy and mine*: For her imperviousness to earthly temptation.
10. *cloudy . . . brow*: Obscuring her eyes, preventing any prediction about the future.
12. *collect my soul*: Ready it for confession.
14. *I dare not begin*: Fear overtakes him. Cf. Arnaut Daniel, "Sols sui": "Qu'ades ses lieis dic a lei cochos motz; pois can la vei, no sai dir, tant l'ai que dire" (Zingarelli).

170 SONNET

Occasionally reversing roles, he goes on the assault against his enemy; but a look at her eyes will deprive him of the power to speak.

1. *fair and kind*: *sembiante umano*, a high compliment for Petrarch. Cf. 238.12.
2. *my faithful guides*: His eyes.
3. *to assail*: To speak his heart.
5. *thought is emptied*: Seeming vain and pointless to him.
8. *the only one who can*: Love.
10. *could understand*: Although Laura has always read the depths of his heart, his words of love have lent themselves to misinterpretation.
11. *so weak and so unsteady*: The words *tremante e fioco* seem to illustrate the sense of these lines and of the tercet that follows: *tremante* because it vacillates between laughter and tears, and *fioco* because it literally weakens the flame (*foco*) with its "i."
12. *a burning love*: *Caritate*, a different kind of love.
13. *steal his breath*: Cause his words to lose power in its spreading light. Cf. the "ray" of pity in 169.9.
14. *how he burns*: *Arde*, speaking of his own inferior love.

171 SONNET

Here his imagery is forceful, both rough and beautiful in sense as well as sound, with an imbalance he corrects in the final tercet.

1–4. *hard and lovely arms . . .*: He finds himself caught between two extremes that overwhelm him, forcing him to be silent.
3. *my suffering he doubles*: A spiritual as well as a physical suffering.

5. *burn the Rhine*: The "frozen Rhine" may be a metaphor for the German character and may suggest a political message in this sonnet.

6. *break its . . . icy ridge*: Melt the barriers thrown up by the force of the river waters.

7. *so equal*: A phrase that corresponds to the doubling of line 3.

8. *pleasing others*: Corresponding to line 4. When he has spoken out he has pleased his audience but earned her disdain.

11. *is marble*: His wit and skill have failed to soften her.

13. *dark glances*: For *sembiante oscuro*, cf. the *sembiante umano* and *caritate* of poem 170.

14. *my sweet sighs*: Brave defiance, worded so that euphony resists the harshness of her aspect.

172 SONNET

He accuses Laura of envy.

1. *O Envy . . . enemy of virtue*: This personification derives from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II, 760 ff. Cf. also Cicero, *Rhetorica* IV: "O virtutis comes invidia, quae bonos insequeris plerumque, immo adeo insectaris." Envy's purpose in *Metamorphoses* is to study the ways in which she can thwart good fortune.

2. *against all good beginnings*: Of a love that began so fortuitously.

5. *pulled out my salvation*: Evicted benevolence from her heart.

6. *too fortunate*: Unneedy.

7. *my pure and humble prayers*: Poems that pay pious homage to her.

9–10. *weeps / at my own good*: According to Ovid and Dante also, these are the responses of Envy.

12. *kill me a thousand times*: Cf. 164.13–14.

14. *Love reassures me*: He may still reach salvation through constancy and faith.

173 SONNET

He has passed the nadir where jealousy reigns, the halfway point in this 56-sonnet series. From such bittersweetness little good can come.

2. *where dwells the one*: Love.

3. *my weary soul*: Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* VI, 5.

4. *earthly paradise*: Where Love reigns in Laura's heart.

7. *is spiderwebs*: Spun to catch souls flying too close to the center.

8. *spurs . . . hot . . . bit . . . hard*: Love, like the demiurge, takes the role of both evil prompter and limiter.

9. *mixed and contrasting*: Distinct from each other, yet obscurely combined.

11. *there it remains*: In this state of suspension between the worldly web and the earthly paradise.

13. *repents for its bold action*: Seeking her in Paradise, responding to the spurs of Love. Cf. 135.16: "Una petra è sì ardita."

14. *from such a root*: Cf. 142.35–36.

174 SONNET

While cursing the circumstances of his birth, this sonnet links his love of Laura with a wider destiny.

1. *the star*: On 20 July 1304, as the sun was entering Leo and just at the moment when the White party began its assault on Florence, according to a letter Petrarch wrote to Boccaccio in 1366.

3. *cruel the cradle*: Italy, from which his family fled into exile in 1311. The Latin *cuna* alludes to his exile, written by the *fata scribunda* at the time of his birth.

4. *cruel the ground*: Provence.

5. *cruel the lady*: Laura in her aspect as the warrior maiden.

8. *those very weapons*: Her eyes.

10. *it's not harsh enough*: She wants him to dedicate his life.

11. *arrow not a spear*: The spear, on the other hand, is the weapon for delivering a coup de grace.

12. *I'm consoled*: Alone in exile, yet with her in his mind.

14. *your gold shaft*: Her glance.

175 SONNET

That he should have failed to bring about an end to exile pains him, but his vision endures. Cyclical in form, this sonnet returns in the last tercet to the language of the first quatrain.

1. *comes to my mind*: Memories that arrive unbidden, like regret.

2. *that dear knot*: Laura's beauty in soul and body.

4. *weeping, pleasure*: *Gioco* may also have the sense of "game." Cf. 172.10.

5. *sulphur and tinder*: Producing a distinctive odor as they burn. Chiari notes that *zolfo* (sulphur), which appears only once, is an odd choice of image.

7. *enjoying that I burn*: Cf. 172.9–10.

8. *on this I live*: Bound, unable to let his line out freely.

10. *still warms me*: Smouldering in a cell of silence.

12. *she from afar*: His dream of love is as distant as the evening star.

14. *that knot*: *Nodo*, in Laura's case fresh and whole, is in his case rather like an egg that has been left too long to rot in its hiding place, giving off the infernal smell of sulphur. Or Petrarch may refer to the components of gun powder—sulphur and saltpeter, thereby obliquely punning on his name as well as parodying his style. An anagram of Roger Bacon's in *De mirabili potestate artis et naturae* (1242) gave this recipe for gunpowder: "Item ponderis totum 30 sed tamen salis petrae luru vopo vir can utri et sulphuris; et sic facies tonitrium et coruscationem, si scias artificium."

176 SONNET

This sonnet and the next tell of a solitary journey Petrarch took through the forest of Ardennes on a return home to Provence, an event mentioned in a letter to Cardinal

Giovanni Colonna dated 1333 (*Familiares* I, 4). Apparently these sonnets were early compositions he revised and added at a later date.

3. *safely I move*: Unarmed with anything but his eyes and ears.

4. *except that sun*: Laura, whose ability to wound him is all he fears. He jokes, said Leopardi.

5. *I move and sing*: Celebrating her.
O unwise thoughts: Uncontrolled, exuberant.

7. *she's in my eyes*: He reproduces her in his mind.

8. *firs and beeches*: Standing in for the real Laura and her company.

10–11. *the murmur / of water*: Hidden waters that nourish the imagination. Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* IV, 19: "Et tenuis fugiens per gramina rivus."

12. *lonely chill*: From its vastness.

14. *too much of my sun is lost*: Her light, lost in the savage hostility of the forest.

177 SONNET

Like Cupid carrying a message to the goddess Venus, he traverses the forest of Ardennes "in one day."

1. *A thousand slopes*: He finds Laura's configuration in the slopes and rivers of the forest, as he saw her in the firs and beeches of poem 176.

2. *famous Ardennes*: A wooded plateau in northeastern France. Caesar and Livy wrote of its fearful vastness, Boiardo and Ariosto of its allure for the imagination as a playground for dark psychological conflict.

3. *he wings*: Love showed him the least arduous paths through the forest, the quickest route to Venus.

6. *unarmed*: Cf. 176.3.

7. *a ship at sea*: The teasing tone of this sonnet recalls the "mixed and contrasting" extremes of 173.9, which here mix metaphorically the sea with the forest.

8. *secret thoughts*: *Penser . . . schivi* are thoughts for which he feels shame, that he's too modest to express. There is an ambiguity in *schivo*, since shifting the consonant "v" to "f" (to *schifo*), can produce the sense of "disgusting." Diez found a precedent for this poem in Arnaut Daniel (Curtius, p. 97).

9. *Still*: He recalls where he was before he started drifting.
end of the dark day: The root meaning of Ardennes in Celtic is "dark, obscure" (*ardu*).

12. *fair country*: Provence.
delightful river: The Rhône.

178 SONNET

Such frequent change of mood, such disorienting vacillation in style, is all the fault of Love.

1. *Love spurs*: The impudent Cupid of poem 177.

5. *now high now low*: His path as he has followed it in these recent sonnets, sometimes with high humor, sometimes low. Cf. poem 134.

7. *seems displeased*: Confused by conflicting signals from Love.

9. *A thought that's friendly*: That offers wise advice.

11. *has hopes of joy*: The mind can turn either way, toward the imperfect world or away from it. Line 11 is typically a point for making a turn in Petrarch's sonnet form.

12. *greater force*: Laura's.

14. *its long death and mine*: Back to life in Avignon and martyrdom.

179 SONNET

Another early work (as early as 1335 says Wilkins), this is a response to a sonnet of his Florentine friend, Geri Gianfigliazzi, asking for Petrarch's advice in matters of love.

1. *my sweet enemy*: Lamenting that his lady warred against him, Geri had asked the expert to suggest a remedy for her anger.

5–6. *wherever . . . / . . . cutting short my life*: When she chances to look at him, as if scanning his face for the offensive thought and censoring it with her anger.

7. *full of humility*: *Sì vera*; cf. 23.101–131 for his thoughts on the psychology of humility.

9. *Were this not so*: If he were not so armed.

10. *looking at Medusa's face*: The snaky-haired Gorgon in Greek myth who turned men to stone and was slain by Perseus with the aid of Wisdom's shield. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, 780 ff., and Dante, *Inferno* IX, 52.

12. *You do the same*: This is the advice Geri asked from Petrarch, who, he believed, knew all the ins and outs of love.

13. *to run away is useless*: Geri had asked if he should leave the band of lovers if found unworthy. This response amounts to an endorsement of his verse.

14. *the kind of wings*: Wings of desire.

180 SONNET

More than ever in a playful mood, he transports his body to the turbulent river Po and allows his spirit to soar aloft on the wings of love. The sonnet projects an image quite contrary to the humility he recommended in poem 179.

1. *Po, you may*: He begins with a pun on the river's name, "Po, ben puo' tu," unintentional, Carducci believed.

my outer shell: His body (the rind).

2. *rapid waves*: The river swollen at flood time.

5. *without tacking*: Without having to trim his sails. The body, meantime, must ply the waves like an expert navigator.

6. *straight to the breeze*: Into the west wind in the direction of Laura.

golden leaves: Of the laurel, golden like her hair.

7. *favor his desire*: Lift him in love.

9. *King over others*: Sovereign like the spirit that guides the ship. Virgil wrote that all other rivers are but tributaries to the Po.

10. *meets the sun*: Flows toward the east and morning.

11. *a light more lovely*: The setting sun, or Laura in the west.

12. *on your horn*: *Corno* is a term applied to one of the Po's branchings, here an analogy for the poet's passion. Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* IV, 370: "Et gemina auratus taurino cornua voltu Eridanus, quo non alius per pinguia culta In mare purpureum violentior effluit amnis."

13. *the rest of me*: His eternal spirit.

14. *dwelling place*: Avignon.

181 Sonnet

Following on the heroic image of the poet at the foredeck of a plunging ship, this sonnet seems to float down into beauty on the wings of the spirit.

1–2. *pretty net / of gold and pearls*: Laura's beauties remembered. Cf. 52.1–3.

3. *that tree, ever green*: The laurel.

5. *The bait*: Her glances and sweet manner that first day.

9. *And the bright light*: Of Laura's eyes, but by analogy with Adam, the divine glory.

10. *the rope*: Of the bird-catcher, Love.

11. *the hand*: Of Laura, but by analogy, the divine gift of spirit.

snow and ivory: Her hand creates a new definition of whiteness, giving warmth to snow and movement to ivory.

13–14. *by charming gestures . . .*: The irreducible elements of the trap that the bird-hunter sets for him.

182 Sonnet

A new voice intervenes, questioning whether reticence or daring furthers the cause of love.

1. *flaming zeal*: The word *zelo* appears just once in the *Canzoniere.*

2. *icy fear*: Of her superiority. Cf. Dante in the presence of St. Benedict in *Paradiso* XXII, 25–27: "I stood there like the anxious man restrained, / forced to hold back the thrust of his desire, / longing to ask while fearing to offend."

6. *full of fear*: The one preventing the thrust of the other by holding it in doubt (*sospetto*).

7. *as if a lady*: Desire being male, timidity female: an absurd example of jealousy. Cf. Propertius, *Elegies* II, VI, 13–14: "Omnia me laedent, timidus sum, ignosce timori; et miser in tunica suspicor esse virum."

8. *little veil*: Of modesty.

9. *Of these two pains*: Flaming zeal and icy fear.

11. *my sweet sickness*: This perpetual burning of zealous love.

12. *the other not*: Not fear.
13. *all men alike*: She is beyond rivalry.
14. *above her light*: Competing with it.

183 Sonnet

He describes his own worst nightmare—his cause for fear, that hope for mercy will be withdrawn altogether. This sonnet marks the halfway point in the *Canzoniere.*

1. *can make me die*: Cf. 164.13: "I'm born and die a thousand times a day."
2. *pointed words*: Full of intelligence.
6–7. *to cut / the pity*: To turn her eyes from him forever.
8. *with death*: A final death.
reassures me: Keeps his hope alive by not exercising her option to kill him.
9. *a heart of ice*: If he seems timid.
11. *from long experience*: From everything he has known or read.
12. *a woman . . . changeable*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 569: "Varium et mutabile semper Foemina."
13. *love's condition*: Compassion.
14. *lasts little time*: The space of a day or night.

184 Sonnet

Not only the variability of Laura frightens him but her fragility. She too is subject to illness and death.

3. *conspired against me*: Cf. Ovid, *Heroides* X, 117: "In me jurarunt somnus, ventusque, fidesque."
4. *truly make me die*: To spur him but fail to rein him in.
5. *thread so tender*: A metaphor for pity.
6. *cannot sustain*: So fastidious is her spirit.
7–8. *so shy . . . / . . . and vile*: She loses interest in life ("comes less often"). Laura is at once the poem, the writing poet, and the attention of his audience in this sonnet.
10. *lovely limbs*: As her senses begin to flee upward in a path toward heaven.
11. *mirror of true graciousness*: Reflecting God's grace. He uses the past tense here, speaking of an earlier age.
12. *if Pity does not stop*: If there is no divine intervention. Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* XIX, *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*: "Sola Pietà nostra parte difende."
14. *vain hopes*: Of restoring life to her limbs.

185 Sonnet

Laura's unique beauty is compared once again with the Arabian phoenix, immortal bird of the East. The early Church Father Lactantius compared the phoenix to the Christian soul.

3. *forms naturally*: Without sophisticated art.

a necklace: A golden ornament of her curls.

5. *she forms a natural diadem*: With the light of her eyes. Cf. 135.1–15 and note for the preparations the phoenix makes for her death and resurrection.

6. *silent flint*: The unspoken poetic idea.

7–8. *subtle liquid / fire*: Like purified gold. Cf. Lucretius *De rerum natura* VI, 203: "liquidi calor aureus ignis"; and Virgil, *Eclogues* VI, 33: "et liquidi simul ignis."

8. *when it is coldest*: When he must pass through the worst of times.

9. *purple gown*: The color of the Virgin.

11. *that stands alone*: The phoenix lives and dies without a mate, coupling only with the sun.

12. *rich and fragrant*: She dies and is reborn in an odor of frankincense and myrrh.

14. *flies through our skies*: She has resurrected herself in Laura. See note to 129.70.

186 SONNET

He celebrates Laura, immortal beauty of the Christian era, as a subject worthy of the genius of Homer and Virgil.

2. *with my own eyes*: He teases.

4. *mixing their two styles*: Strengthening the art of the Greek with the Latin.

5. *Aeneas sad, and troubled*: Because their heroism would pale in comparison with the Christian figure.

7. *and him who ruled*: Augustus Caesar, to whom Virgil dedicated the *Aeneid*.

8. *him Aegisthus killed*: Agamemnon, at the instigation of Clytemnestra, as recounted in the *Iliad*.

9. *ancient flower of virtue*: Cornelius Scipio Africanus, a great Roman statesman and conqueror of Hannibal. Petrarch admired him throughout his life and made him the subject of his Latin epic *Africa*.

11. *new flower*: The subject of his verse, Laura—Petrarch's hope for a new golden age of peace.

all honesty and beauty: Laura's arms.

12. *Ennius . . . rough*: Roman poet and contemporary of Scipio Africanus, wrote a long epic poem on the Punic Wars, noted by Ovid and Statius for its rude style. Ennius predicted that each age would be distinguished by its ability to produce another Homer.

13–14. *I hope my wit . . .*: A modest disclaimer about his style, as well as an ironic comment on an age that produces not epics but love poetry.

187 SONNET

He himself cannot do her justice.

1–4. *When Alexander reached . . .*: In Plutarch's *Lives*, a naked Alexander crowned the tomb of Achilles for two reasons, to celebrate Achilles' love for Patrocles and because of his celebration by Homer. According to Cicero, Alexander sighed because he himself was never so celebrated.

3. *so clear a trumpet*: Homer.

5. *pure white dove*: Laura, symbol of peace, the antithesis of Achilles and Alexander.

6. *whose equal, I think*: "Non so se" injects an element of doubt.

7. *resounds too little*: Without the clarion call of a trumpet, rather with sighs.

9. *Orpheus*: Who lost his wife, Eurydice, for having loved too well.

10. *shepherd Mantua still honors*: Virgil, whose *Eclogues* explored the mystic origins of pastoral life.

12. *star deformed*: Petrarch's birth into this age.

13. *loves her lovely name*: This devout phrase conflicts with his conclusion in the words to follow.

14. *mars, perhaps, her praise*: The hesitation of "perhaps" echoes the "I think" of line 6 and the "resounds too little" of line 7, linking the end of the poem with the beginning.

188 SONNET

He asks the sun to stay its course. Dated 1366, this sonnet calls up an Eden cut off from his sight by ever-deepening shadows.

2. *alone in her sweet home*: Exiled in the new world. *Soggiorno* refers to her brief stay in this, his life.

4. *our fair fall*: Eve, who succumbed to temptation and fell into the sin that condemned the race.

5. *Let's stay*: Stop the flow of time.

7. *on every hillside*: Shining on every promontory equally, not pausing at the unrivaled branch flourishing in line 3.

8. *what I most yearn for*: The sweet light of her eyes, life, time.

11. *little sapling*: *Verga*, that is, Laura as a child.

12. *takes from my eyes*: Obscuring the vision he had of her in the beginning.

189 SONNET

Seeking a return to the "blessed place" where he might find peace, he likens himself to a mariner passing through the Strait of Messina, threatened by the rock and the whirlpool, with only Love as his guide.

1. *My ship*: His soul in his body on the sea of life.

2. *through rough seas*: During the worst possible historical time and season.

3. *Charybdis and the Scylla reef*: Legendary test of spiritual endurance in the *Odyssey*, *Metamorphoses*, and the *Aeneid*.

4. *master . . . foe*: Love, who has him at Laura's mercy.

5. *quick and insane thought*: Each rowing in a different direction.

7–8. *the sail . . . / blowing breaks*: These lines show how deceptively Love navigates by steering clear of both subject and object. One can read them (and perhaps the whole sonnet) two ways, as a threat to his soul, or as a rebellious joke.

9. *mist of my disdain*: For his own verse.

10. *washes and frees*: As with a purifying love.

12. *two trusty signs*: Her eyes, like stars obscured by the stormy darkness.

13. *is reason as is skill*: The sail responds to reason and the ropes to skill.

190 SONNET

The white doe of this sonnet recalls the famous legend of deer appearing, 300 years after the death of Caesar, with collars around their necks warning, "Noli me tangere, Caesaris sum." Boccaccio also spoke of a white doe in *Decameron* (IV, 6) in an episode where a melancholy dream comes true.

1. *A doe of purest white*: A beast sacred to Diana, here representing Laura.

2. *two horns of gold*: The braids of her hair.

3. *between two streams*: The Sorgue and the Rhône (Zingarelli), the one flowing by Vaucluse and the other by Avignon. Other commentators say the Sorgue and Durance. Or the rivers may be allegorical for the two branches of his love, one twisted, one straight.

4. *season not yet ripe*: April.

7. *just like a miser*: Like one greedy for her. A play on words (*lavoro-l'avaro*) has him turning from one obsession to another.

9. *around her lovely neck*: On a golden collar, according to an account by Solinus, third century A.D.

11. *my Caesar*: Commentators identify Caesar as God, who created Laura free of sexual and worldly desires. Cf. *Familiares* XVIII, 8: "Nemo me capiat, quem Julius Caesar liberum esse jussit."

12. *climbed . . . midway*: When the sun reaches its zenith mankind is most prone to seek shade.

14. *fell in the water*: Took the wrong path.

191 SONNET

Is it possible to live on the strength of his vision alone? This sonnet begins a section of the *Canzoniere* (ending with poem 263) that was written into the manuscript late in life in Petrarch's own hand.

7. *sweet time of day*: In the morning.

8. *surpassing all high hope*: *Che vince*, taking him hostage.

9. *were it not so quick*: Time.

10–11. *live / on smell alone*: He learned this bit of natural history from a legend recounted by Pliny (*Historia naturalis*) about an Indian sect on the Ganges: "nullius ad escam opis indigent, odore vivunt pomorum silvestrium, longiusque pergentes, eadem illa in praesidio gerunt, ut olfactu alantur."

11. *gained belief*: He learned this from a reputable source.

12. *on water or on fire*: Similar phenomena described by Pliny.

13. *every sweetness*: By extrapolation to his case, living on hope and desire alone. Petrarch uses the Provençal word *dolzor* instead of his customary *dolcezza* (sweetness).

192 SONNET

Laura walking through the hills is a miracle to make all Nature rejoice. The one sense he failed to mention in poem 191, hearing, is given ample play by this poem.

1. *Let us stay*: Cf. 188.5

2. *surpassing Nature*: Approaching the divine. Cf. 191.1–2.

6. *never seen before*: Because uniquely experienced by him.

7. *puts in motion*: Cf. the transfiguration wrought by Beatrice in Dante's canzone "Donne ch'avete" ("De li occhi suoi, come ch'ella li mova") *Vita nuova* XIX.

8. *through shady cloisters*: Bringing light to hidden meanings.

10. *oak ancient and black*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IX, 381; and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IX, 664. The black oak stands for the eternal despair of unfortunate lovers.

11. *or press them*: Make her mark on them.

12. *loving sparks*: That ignite the fires in all who behold her.

14. *made serene*: Brought to peace, as the sky clears when the sun has risen.

193 SONNET

A sonnet that responds to the question asked in poem 191, can he live on sight alone? Her visible beauty nourishes his mind and consumes his soul in forgetfulness, but complete rapture comes when he hears the sound of her voice.

4. *all of Lethe*: Forgetting the burden of mortal life.

5. *When I hear things*: Words spoken to him alone.

7. *rapt by the hand*: Stolen by the bliss of Love. Cf. 181.11.

I know not where: According to Plato, the soul once born into life forgets the source of the bliss it knew in heaven.

8. *double sweetness*: The sight and the sound, divine and earthly, intellective and sensitive.

9–10. *that voice . . . / resounds*: With words of greatest wisdom and virtue.

11. *cannot understand*: Because he has experienced only a part of her sweetness.

12. *Then all together . . . span*: Suddenly seeing, hearing, and understanding the form, music, and meaning of something—all within the spreading of a palm. What he describes is eurythmy.

13. *appears to sight*: The highest acts of creation consist of such experiences, in which the poet is seized by divinity.

194 SONNET

This is the first of a series of sonnets (poems 194, 196–198) added to the collection in 1368, all beginning with the word *L'aura*. Together with poem 197, they were completed not too long before transcription during a period of intense editorial activity.

1. *The gracious breeze*: *L'aura gentil*, coming from the west.

2. *awakening flowers*: By moving through the countryside, touching the sleeping land. Cf. poem 192.

4. *in labor and in fame*: Because of the notoriety of his love poetry.

5–8. *To find a place* . . .: Lines 5 and 6 refer to Vaucluse, lines 7 and 8 to Avignon.

8. *my sun today*: Laura.

9. *such a sweetness*: *Tante et tali*, differing from the open sweetness of Tuscany.

11. *fleeing is slow*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* II, 80.

12. *but wings*: To extricate himself from a paradoxical love that draws him back into the fatal center.

195 SONNET

Although it interrupts the *L'aura* sequence, this sonnet was retained in this place by Petrarch even after several editorial changes in 1368. Emerging like a naked tree trunk around which he would cultivate his vine, it states his determination to exhaust himself in the service of Laura.

1. *face and hair are changing*: Showing signs of age as well as a change in style.

2. *baited hook*: An image from bird-catching.

4. *the tree that has no care*: The laurel, evergreen and indestructible.

5. *lose its water, sky its stars*: All things impossible, as he indicates in line 12.

10. *until I am deboned*: Until he has turned himself inside out and opened to view every tissue of pain penetrated by the arrow of love.

12. *All things that cannot be*: Referring to the events of Revelation, the end of the world.

196 SONNET

Believed to have been written before the death of Laura (1348), this sonnet was extensively revised in 1368. While working on it Petrarch went ahead and composed poems 194 and 197 and copied them all, along with poem 198, into the final manuscript at the same time (Wilkins, pp. 171–72). This second in the *L'aura* series adds the quality of gold (*l'auro-l'oro*) to the list of her name's possibilities.

1–2. *The tranquil aura* . . . / . . . *strikes*: A breeze whose sound wounds at the same time that it calms. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVIII, 7.

6. *jealousy or anger*: According to Leopardi and Carducci, that which Laura harbors for his little good fortune. Jealousy in old Latin was connected with fear of competi-

tion (cf. 182.5–8). The link between jealousy and anger here recalls the proximity of wrath and sloth in Dante, *Inferno* VII.

8. *furbished gold*: *Terso*, perhaps with the alternate sense of "held in check."

9. *wont to loosen*: Once a gesture of open lovingness.

11. *thinking of it*: Remembering the sound of *mormorando* ("murmuring"), with its hint of death (*mort*).

12. *tighter knots*: With greater control.

14. *free it from such ties*: Such stringent conditions.

197 SONNET

As the tranquil and gracious aura of poem 196 threatened to suffocate him, so that which is celestial turns him to stone.

3. *a yoke of sweetness*: The burden of testifying. Cf. Matt. 10:9, "Iugum meum suave est."

5. *has power like Medusa's*: In Ovid (*Metamorphoses* IV, 630 ff.) Perseus turns the jealous Atlas into a rocky mountain by holding up the severed head of Medusa.

8. *amber*: A fossil resin valued for its beauty and its property of attracting lighter objects when polished.

9. *curly snare*: The conical shape of her curls.

11. *armed only with humility*: The desire to serve her. Humility is often called into service at a point of ambiguity. Cf. 179.7.

12. *Her shadow*: Her temporal self.

13. *with whitened fear*: Made pallid and ineffectual.

14. *into marble*: Transformed like Atlas into hard rock.

198 SONNET

The fear of judgment expressed in poem 197 is weighed in a balance with her fertile aura and the inseminating effect of her eyes.

1. *spreads and waves*: Like the breeze over sunlit fields.

3–4. *binds / my weary heart*: Sustains it. "Binds" continues the grainfield metaphor, aluding to the tying of the sheaves.

5. *blood's own fiber*: His veins.

6. *all tremble*: Feel her force at their naked centers. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXX, 46 ff.; and Virgil, *Aeneid* II, 120.

9. *those lights*: The truth in her eyes.

10. *those locks*: Her gathered hair. Cf. 196.7 and 196.12.

11. *right shoulder . . . left*: Corresponding to his life and death in line 8.

12. *I cannot comprehend*: Cf. 193.11.

13. *my mind is struck*: *Offeso*, literally "assailed."

14. *wearied and oppressed*: Under the weight of his good fortune.

199 SONNET

According to a note on his working manuscript, Petrarch found this sonnet among his papers on 19 May 1368 during a sleepless night and was reminded of events twenty-five years earlier. Wilkins (1951, pp. 171, 184) describes how Petrarch left a space for it in the final version but delayed transcribing it until late in life, during crucial revisions in 1373–74. The fiction of the sonnet is that Laura has removed her glove so that he now gazes on the beauty of her unadorned hand. Two more sonnets follow on the subject of the glove.

2. *enclosing in so little space*: His heart constricts like a bird caught in the hand (Daniello). Cf. 23.73–74 and 127.85–90.

3. *all art and care*: Cf. poems 154, 159, 193.12–14. Nature and Heaven conspired in her creation.

5. *five pearls of oriental hue*: Her finger tips.

7. *naked now*: Revealed.

10. *polished ivory*: The ivory hand in French art is symbolic of the monarchy.
fresh roses: Of her fingernails.

11. *such gracious spoils*: The glove. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 651: "Dulces exuviae, dum fata deusque sinebat."

12. *had as much of her fair veil*: He plays on the layering of meaning implicit in the lady removing her glove, in the naked hand revealed by her act, and in the beauty of the glove itself.

13. *O the inconstancy*: The unpredictability.

14. *this is theft*: his seeing is a furtive act.

200 SONNET

Another in the series of sonnets recounting the affair of the glove.

1. *Not only*: Line 1 lingers over the attributes of her hand.

2. *clothes itself again*: Concealing itself.

3. *the other, too*: The left hand may also enchant him.

5. *none in vain*: He is susceptible to all of them.

6. *new, and honest forms*: Her ungloved hands.

8. *cannot reach it*: Cannot comprehend the perfection of her being.

9. *her eyebrows lit by stars*: Cf. 157.10.

12. *in amazement*: Of her miraculous qualities, at which he can only marvel.

13–14. *which seen / in summer . . . put out the sun*: Conquering light at the peak of light.

201 SONNET

Regret at having lost an opportunity pervades this sonnet. The affair of the glove is long over.

2. *embroidery of silk*: *Serico trapunto*, the glove Laura permitted him to take up in poem 199.

4. *Think who has worn this!*: He is able to infer the whole person from the glove.

5. *that day*: The first day.

9. *that I did not*: Cf. 199.14.

10–11. *firmer / against the strength*: More resistant to all the charms listed in poem 200.

12. *add wings to my feet*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* VIII, 224: "pedibus timor addidit alas."

13. *take vengeance*: Redress the wrong she does him by withdrawing her favor. Cf. 72.55–58.

202 SONNET

The cruel force of circumstance threatens to overwhelm his supine heart, still fearful and humble.

1. *polished . . . living ice*: Impenetrable. The polished surface of the ice hints at a new sophistication.

4. *I am perishing*: Giving up his blood to the flame little by little, unreplenished by the water of mercy.

6. *thundering skies or lion that roars*: Death is like vengeful Jupiter or an angry monarch about to snuff out his life.

8. *I in silence*: A sign of his obedience and humility.

10. *like double columns*: His defense. Cf. poem 40, where the doubling of love and pity on the part of the benefactor would bring forth a doubling of the poet's creative output.

13. *my enemy*: The living ice of line 1.

14. *but fate*: Unhappy chance. In this particular extremity, love cannot be held responsible for the weakness of his verse.

203 SONNET

This melancholy reproof addresses an indifferent Laura who will, nevertheless, continue to live immortalized in his verse. The sonnet was translated into Latin by Thomas Gray and seems to have served as a lesson for "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard."

4. *and yet she sees it*: Laura, and only Laura can see into his heart.

5. *of such little faith*: An extraordinary departure, which has its repercussions in later verse.

6. *my heart within my eyes*: Always before their shared secret.

7. *for my star*: His destiny to be born at this point in history. Cf. 187.12 and 202.14.

10. *diffused in all my verse*: Diluting to the point of quenching his fire.

11. *yet inflame perhaps a thousand others*: The uncertainty of "perhaps" corresponds to "diffused." "Others" is a reference to posterity.

12. *my sweet fire*: Zingarelli refers to this as a blandishment.

14. *still full of sparks*: The memory of her loving eyes inspiring new poets, but also his tongue giving off incendiary bits in his verse, even after death.

204 SONNET

He recollects himself after his bitter words in the last sonnet, addressing his heart, soul, eyes, and ears about the choices that lie ahead.

1. *My soul*: The line echoes the beginning of poem 135, the canzone that began his winding travels through recent history.

3. *my wishful eyes*: Open to the world and its glory.

you among the senses: His hearing.

6. *so badly traveled*: Laura redeems him from an unenlightened present.

8. *footprints*: Immortal signs that she has come and that her beauty has been recorded.

11. *can prepare us*: Make us worthy.

13. *the cloud*: Shrouding his world in confusion. Cf. the *nebbia* of poem 66.

205 SONNET

In this summation of the longest sonnet cycle in the *Canzoniere*, all that has come before, however painful, shares in the sweetness of the pleasure she has given him.

1–4. *Sweet anger* . . . : These lines stand without benefit of verb.

4. *sweet breeze*: The aura of heaven which his life-in-time has granted him.

7. *sweet honor*: Cf. Dante, *Rime*: "Ch' amor di tanto onor mi ha fatto degno." See also Catullus XLVIII, 17: "non est dea nescia nostri quae dulcem curis miscet amaritiam."

8. *my only pleasure*: The last eight lines of the sonnet are ruled by this statement. Cf. Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, 42: "Elige cui dicas: Tu mihi sola places."

9–10. *someday, someone*: Cf. 203.11, "perhaps a thousand"; here, only one, perhaps a love poet who might follow him.

10. *tinged with sweet envy*: Of one so intoxicated with sweetness.

12–14. *Others* . . . : Cf. 204.5–8. Others might think he enjoyed the best of all possible worlds, despite the evidence of their senses.

206 CANZONE

Like poem 29, this canzone is modeled on a Provençal form. Bertran de Born lent a name to it, the *escondig* or "defense," in his canzone, "Eu m'escondisc, domna, que mal non mier." The stanzas rhyme by pairs, using *-ella, -ei, and -ia* throughout in a circular pattern of recurrence. The *-ella* words, used to rhyme interiorly in poem 29, are brought forth to the end of the line, becoming once more interior in the last line of the poem.

The poet defends himself against the accusation that he has fallen short in his love of her by something he has said. The if-clause-subjunctive-conditional sequence and the sounds of words heavy with sibilants call his true meaning into question.

1. *If ever I said it*: This phrase is repeated three times in each of the first four stanzas. The words he has been accused of saying are never identified in the canzone but are hinted at in a number of lines.

4. *vulgar lordship*: A lesser love, in which the body rules the soul.

5. *may all stars*: Not just the fateful star under which he was born.

7. *both fear and jealousy*: A cruel double punishment.

8. *my enemy*: Laura.

11. *the golden ones . . . the leaden*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 468 ff.

14. *with blind torch*: *Facella*, a pauper's candle that is too faint to light the way.

15. *straight to my death*: To his natural end, shortened by deprivation.

20. *full of my least desires*: A form of damnation in which only unworthy desire rises to combat her resistance.

24. *nor his sister*: The moon.

25. *nor damsel nor a lady*: Nor any mortal woman.

27. *Pharaoh saw*: Cf. Exod. 14–15.

36. *might just well do it*: Say it. He alludes to Virtue "alone and locked in darkness."

37. *But if I did not*: He turns the premises around but without confirming or denying the charge against him. In the next stanza, he will deny it.

39. *weary little bark*: His humanity.

40. *mercy at the tiller*: Cf. poem 189.

41–44. *may she not change . . .*: A very beautiful expression of wishful thinking that carries its own defense. To return to the pure love of that first day has always constituted his greatest need.

45. *such faithfulness*: Cf. 203.5–6: "Unending beauty of such little faith, / can you not see my heart within my eyes?"

46. *I never said it*: Whatever he said was never meant to impugn his pure faith in the young Laura.

47. *gold, cities, or castles*: With these images he brushes away abstraction, seizing real weapons of irony that his enemies can understand.

48. *hold to the saddle*: Truth conquers through the strength of one man who downs the challenger on the battlefield.

53. *three, four, and six times*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* I, 98: "O terque quaterque beati, quis . . . contigit oppetere!" Carducci cites Boccaccio, *Decameron* V, I, the tale of Cimone and Efigenis, in which the narrator tells of the "holy, weighty and beneficent powers of Love."

54. *who dies before*: Who dies at the peak of his powers.

55. *For Rachel*: Cf. Gen. 29:25. Dante (*Purgatorio* XXVII, 106–108) also distinguishes between the two sisters, having Leah say: "She loves to contemplate her lovely eyes; / I love to use my hands to adorn myself: her joy is in reflection, mine in act."

56. *nor with another*: One more worldly and materialistic.

58. *if Heaven calls us back*: Cf. 29.11. Petrarch uses the word *rappella* to mean to snatch from the jaws of death.

59. *in Elijah's chariot*: Cf. 2 Kings 2:11.

207 CANZONE

If poem 206 was an attempt to penetrate her hardness, its weapons have glanced off, and here Petrarch finds himself regrouping at the edge of the battlefield. The canzone was written in part in 1346, then revised and completed in 1368.

3. *new stratagems*: More clever methods of wooing her.

6. *teaching me such art*: The furtive art.

8–9. *thief/ of that fair*: Cf. 199.12–14.

10. *in great pain*: His living in great pain is a given, the honor due him for having loved her. Cf. 205.5–8.

12. *the style I now must take*: A new tack. He last spoke of changing style in 142.35–39.

13. *there's less shame*: Cf. Ovid. *Fasti* IV, 9: "Quae decuit primis sine crimine lusimus annis." It is forgiveable in one's youth to steal glances from a forbidden love.

15. *beauty lofty and divine*: Laura at their first encounter.

18. *some hidden help that is external*: The divine spark that linked him to God, seen in her eyes.

22. *become annoying*: His youth no longer excuses him.

22. *a poor, starving wretch*: He must steal.

25. *by envy*: His own. Poem 206 seemed to teach that his sins are his own, not ever hers, even though his syntax might give a different impression.

32. *a man of wax*: The first of several images that encompass the life-death-rebirth cycle. Others are the hunted bird, the salamander, the spring lamb, and the seasons.

33–38. *I look around*. . .: His efforts to woo her are those of the innocent bird seeking ever more nourishing fruit just where the hunter is most likely to spread his net.

41. *wondrous salamander*: According to popular belief, an animal that both lives and feeds in flames.

42. *he wills it so*: The wondrous salamander is as natural as the will of Love. Cf. Mark 14:36.

44. *I rested for awhile*: Doomed like the feeding bird.

45. *as they do others*: First being fed and then sacrificed as food for others.

48. *here and there*: Like any creature seeking to sustain life.

52. *what she does not miss*: Since she possesses renewable wealth in such abundance.

53. *All know*: All but one, Laura.

57. *who knows*: He is one who has researched this inexhaustible subject.

58. *There's one who*: Cf. 191.11

62. *such stinginess*: For the word *parco*, see 144.7.

64. *let me die by your hand*: He implores her to look upon him lovingly one last time.

65. *good death can honor*: Cf. 59.15 and 140.44.

66. *burns hottest*: Cf. 105.52: "a hidden beauty is the sweetest thing."

70. *regret those cries*: When his anger burst out in recrimination.

72. *O thought in vain*: Telling the plain truth failed to change anything.

76. *knots and chokes it*: Forcing him to lie, steal, and to veil his meaning.

78. *The fault is yours*: All conspire: the world and Fortune, Love and Laura.

80. *another's sin*: The world's. Cf. poems 216 and 217.

82. *too much light*: That dazzled him.

84. *sweet poison*: Injected on the arrow tip of Love, causing delirium, cries, and annoyance.

87–90. *and it will be . . .*: This impending cure refers to the "style I now must take" of the first stanza.

91. *to die well*: A revision of line 65 that may be strategic, signaling his intention to make new use of his "sweet poison."

92. *I'll hold the field*: His war continues, but with new weapons.

98. *equal to my bad*: A preview of the poems to follow.

208 SONNET

However he may regret the necessity for his furtive style, he arms himself with it again and turns toward Avignon. Wilkins dates this poem very early, to 1333.

1–2. *river . . . / . . . gnawing*: A pun on *Rodano-rodere* (Rhône-gnaw).

3. *descends in yearning*: To the valley and eventually to the sea.

4. *and you by Nature only*: The river's path is swift and direct, his weak and diffuse.

5. *flow on ahead*: To Avignon, where Laura is.

6–7. *give the sea / its due*: Its rapid spring torrents. Cf. 148.3–4.

9. *that sun of ours*: Laura.

10. *your left bank*: The side of Avignon.

11. *perhaps (oh what hope!)*: This bit of phrasing was more than once imitated and caused fierce debate in 1654, because one scholar said it required a question mark and another, an exclamation point (Carducci).

slowness: His failure to come, to cross over to the greener grass.

12. *kiss her foot*: A gesture of obeisance to the pope.

and lovely hand: A sign of respect to the monarch.

13. *be like your words*: A reproach, in the spirit of the words to follow.

14. *The spirit's ready*: The words of Christ on the Mount of Olives when he could not rouse the sleeping disciples. They wound the poet's conscience, or anyone else's who cannot cross over—cannot "stand the test," in the words of Jesus.

209 SONNET

The journey from Vaucluse is like a flight from love, futile for him who carries the incurable wound.

1. *Those hills of sweetness*: Vaucluse.

3. *and there before me*: In his memory.

behind me still: Literally, at his back.

6. *though I move*: Though he may shift his styles and even, apparently, his thinking.

9. *Just like a stag*: Cf. 23.157–160, Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 67 ff.

10. *a poisoned piece of iron*: This arrow tip is lethal.

12. *that shaft piercing my left side*: The "iron" of his analogy turns to poison what is usually golden, creating a sickness.

13. *giving me delight*: Yet part of him feels pleasure. How this compares with the plight of the stag has been questioned. See note to 23.159.

210 SONNET

It seems that she has singled him out for suffering. The rhyme scheme *abab, baab* is used only one other time in the collection, in poem 295.

1. *Spain's Ebro*: A river forming a perimeter on the west, part of a frame.
India's Hydaspes: A perimeter on the east.
2. *though searching every slope*: Every easy access to a spiritual port.
3. *Red shore*: The Red Sea, to the south.
Caspian waves: Completing the frame on the north.

4. *another phoenix*: Cf. poems 135 and 185. The phoenix is Petrarch's original vision of Laura, here put in geopolitical perspective.

5–6. *What crow . . . what raven . . . / sings of my fate*: Classically, omens of good fortune. Both birds are also common European symbols for the death-goddess, found perching over the body of the slain hero in ballads.

6. *What Sister Fate*: The fate who spins, the one who winds, or the one who cuts the thread of life?

7. *is a deaf asp*: The asp, in order not to hear the incantation, holds one ear to the ground and covers the other with its tail.

8. *wretch that I am*: Cf. 150.14. Petrarch is speaking in the voice of ordinary mankind.

11. *she offers others*: Cf. 207.51–52.

14. *my temples flower white*: The image recalls Giacomo Colonna's sonnet celebrating Petrarch's coronation, in which the laurel "sopra le tempie verdeggiava." Cf. poems 166 and 322.

211 SONNET

This sonnet, once marked for exclusion from the *Canzoniere*, dates precisely the moment his love began. It was revised and added to the collection in 1369.

1. *Desire spurs*: *Voglia*, willful desire. Petrarch makes a rout here of the Platonic scheme in which reason holds the reins of the soul's chariot. Cf. poem 6.
2. *Habit carries me away*: Mere custom, the law of nature, has him in its grip.
4. *its right hand*: Beckoning with false promises. Cf. the "feigning" of 210.13.
6. *disloyal and blind*: Love, because he has led him into a blind corner.
7. *reason now is dead*: Defeated in the struggle with sensual love.

9–10. *Virtue . . . / sweet words*: The attributes of Laura were mere entrapments, like the right hand of hope in line 4.

13. *sixth of April*: See note to 3.1. This precise date was also inscribed in Petrarch's copy of Virgil's works, called the Ambrosiana.

14. *the labyrinth*: In classical myth a term synonymous with the Underworld, entered by heroes and wise men as a test and as practice for death. In medieval times it symbolized purgatory, as in the garden of love or *le chemin de Jerusalem* and *lacs d'amour*, designed in the shape of a knot, appearing in Gothic churches. In his *Epistles* III, 21, 22, and 23, Petrarch specifically referred to Avignon as his own labyrinth. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* V, 588 ff.: "Ut quondam Creta fertur Labyrinthus in alta, parietibus textum caecis inter, ancipitemque mille viis habuisse dolum: qua signa sequendi frangeret indeprensus, et irremeabilis error," See also Boethius, *Consolatione Philosophiae*: "inextricabilem labyrinthum rationibus texens."

212 Sonnet

Subservient to the power she has over his senses, he compares his art to the labors of a lame ox pursuing a fleeing doe. This sonnet marks the twentieth year of his service to Love, dating itself Good Friday, 1347.

1. *Blest in my dreams*: His prophecy for a new day.
satisfied to languish: Cf. 206.52–54.

2. *chase a summer breeze*: An enumeration of *impossibilia* in the style of Arnaut Daniel. Cf. Mark 13:28–30.

7. *a doe*: Cf. poem 190, the inviolate white doe of Caesar.

8. *with ox*: The connection of the ox with the doe was made by Arnaut Daniel, alluding to the myth of Pasiphaë, the moongoddess who mated with Poseidon's white bull and produced the Minotaur (Carducci).

13. *have won me*: *Merco*, referring to the idea that his worth has been assessed and found wanting.

14. *under this star*: Venus, the Third Heaven of love poets, whose rise in Taurus blessed the season when Petrarch first saw her. The epicycle of Venus around the sun in summer creates a light too bright to be seen safely with the naked eye. Cf. 142.2.
took the bait and hook: When he entered the labyrinth on that first day.

213 Sonnet

For all his weariness he is still able to sing the praises of Laura, whose attributes in this sonnet take on the coloration of the poet's. Castelvetro read in this Petrarch's response to rumors that he had been bewitched.

3. *wisdom of gray age*: A common theme in love poetry, referring to the beloved's contemplative life. Cf. 182.8 and 210.14.

4. *in modest lady*: One of the characteristics he has shared with her from time to time.

7. *a loving spirit glowing*: Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* XIX: "her eyes, wherever she may choose to look, / send forth their spirits radiant with love / to strike the eyes of anyone they meet."

8–11. *breaking all hardness . . . / . . . to stone, / . . . to give to others*: A sequence described in the metamorphoses of poem 23.

13. *tenderly are interrupted*: She smiles, weeps, and sighs in turn.
14. *I had been transformed*: He has taken on these qualities in his own life and verse.

214 SESTINA

He places his first encounter with Laura in a wholly new context in this intensely religious and elegiac sestina, where he offers up his love of Laura to God as a sacrifice.

1. *Three days ago*: In his young manhood, Zingarelli believed that Petrarch's mood in this sestina is ruled by poem 212, in which he commemorated his first encounter in absolute, rather than real time. See notes to poem 3.

2–3. *Where it could care . . .*: Describing how he committed himself to loving her.

4. *she, still uncertain*: His soul, unaware of its worth.

5. *alone . . . free*: The unsuspecting young poet. Cf. 23.1–40.

7. *A tender flower*: Laura.

8. *the day before*: In adolescence.

9. *and be free*: Remain aloof. Cf. 23.1–6.

10. *so new*: Her beauty was unique, revolutionary.

14. *quickly made me turn*: Cf. 6.1–8.

17. *verses, stones, or juice of herb*: Every art or science.

20. *from its own knot*: Its ties with the soul.

21. *all medicines*: All bitter remedies.

24. *to come out lame*: To emerge from the forest less than he was when he entered. Cf. 212.8.

26. *light foot that's free*: Like the foot of Laura, free of worldly care.

29. *give me your right hand*: Restore faith in him.

30. *win my shadow*: Secure his salvation.

31. *Look at my state*: Of exile.

35. *my wandering consort*: His soul, and by extension, Laura.
let yours be the prize: May he renounce any claims on her who belongs to God.

39. *held back in the wood*: Along with the flesh, still lame and tied to a mortal love.

215 SONNET

Poem 214 provided the groundwork for a new idea, liberating in its naturalness. This sonnet begins a series of twenty-two, culminating in poem 237, a sestina.

1. *In noble blood a quiet, humble life*: Cf. 214.7–9 and 4.12–14.

3. *wisdom of age*: Cf. 213.3 He alludes to the significance of the Old Testament for the New.

5. *this lady's planet*: Venus.

6. *King of stars*: God.

11. *in its silence*: Love seeds itself in her ineffable being.

12. *something in her eyes*: That light collected by the King of stars.

14. *make honey bitter . . . wormwood sweet*: Make a heaven or hell of his life.

216 SONNET

This sonnet is a study on the last line of the preceding sonnet.

1. *All day I weep*: He returns to the language of poems 22 and 66 (sestinas), 50 (a canzone), and 164 (a sonnet), describing his isolation.
5. *I wear out my eyes*: Consuming the light in them.
7. *I rank the worst*: Worse than the lowest animal.
those loving arrows: Laura's glances.
8. *exiled from my peace*: The sleep all other miserable mortals and living things enjoy.
9. *from one sun*: In doubling his pain he has halved his life.
11. *death which is called life*: Cf. 138.7.
12. *More for her fault*: For having chosen the wrong target.
13. *for living pity*: What he saw in her eyes.

217 SONNET

Once he mustered his forces in fervid verse and flaming words; now he will be known for her beauty alone.

1. *just complaint*: By standing out in his own defense with words that might evoke her pity.

4. *in midsummer*: That withholds pity from him at the height of manhood. Cf. 132.14.

5. *and break the cruel cloud*: His annoying style might exhaust her patience. Cf. 189.7–8.

6. *the aura of my flaming words*: His most scurrilous poems. He's alluding to poems such as the Babylon series, 136–138.

7. *or make her hateful*: What he might have been accused of doing in 170.14, 183.14, and 203.5–6.

8. *those lovely eyes*: A break in the line between "lovely" and "eyes" illustrates the sense of lines 5 and 6.

9–11. *Not hate . . .*: He continues to split his meanings by mixing up his phrases so they could be understood in their opposite sense. Carducci called this tercet "disorderly."

12. *But I shall sing*: The purity of the phrase interrupts the mocking tone of lines 1–11.
godlike beauty: He rescues her from crudeness.

13. *shaken*: Liberated.

218 SONNET

To lose the incomparable Laura to death would be like returning to chaos.

1–4. *However many . . .*: Cf. 13.1–4.

3. *with her fair face*: Her beauty had the effect of clearing the atmosphere of shadow and bringing serenity to the moment.

4. *daybreak makes*: Eclipsing the light of all other ladies.
5. *whispering in my ear*: A premonition.
7. *darkened*: Without its sun.
8. *virtues die*: Of which she is the unique example.
9–12. *If Nature took . . .*: Reversing the creation in Genesis.
13. *so much and more*: Corresponds to "however many" in line 1.
14. *close and hide her eyes*: If something were to shut off the source of love.

219 SONNET

He returns to the double beauty of a new day dawning with this "esercitazione letteraria . . . inconsistente e artificioso al tempo stesso" (Sapegno).

1. *new song sung*: The present sonnet.
weeping of the birds: Laments of poets. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VI, the myth of Procne and Philomela.
2. *echoed in the valleys*: Among the people.
4. *fresh, rapid streams*: Spring torrents.
5. *The one*: The goddess of the dawn, Aurora. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII.
6. *contained no failings or deceit*: He may allude to Cephalus and Procris in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII, each of whom succumbed to weakness.
7. *loving dance*: The activities of Aurora trying to reawaken her lover.
8. *fleece of white*: Of the aged Tithonos, Aurora's impotent lover shut by her in a chamber, where he remained forever chirping like a circket.
10. *that other sun*: Laura. The word for dawn, *l'aurora*, contains a pun, "Laura now."

220 SONNET

As if to answer some unspoken doubt about fidelity that he may have planted in poem 219, this sonnet asks a series of rhetorical questions that should lay that thought to rest.

1. *the gold and from what mine*: A series of "oriental" images follows. Cf. 200.9–11.
2. *What thorns*: What painful emotion colored the roses of her cheeks?
3. *gave its frost*: Chilled her fire with virtue.
4. *and breath*: *Lena*, unique in the collection, suggesting enticement.
5–6. *pearls . . . / sweet words*: Her words of pity withheld.
8. *more tranquil*: Her brows now cleared of anger and disdain.
12. *high, kind light*: That he saw at his first encounter with her.
13. *declaring war and peace*: Either loving or angry in their expression.
14. *burn my heart*: Literally "cook" (*cuocono*).
in fire and in ice: Corresponding to war and peace.

221 SONNET

A final rhetorical question completes the series begun in poem 220. This sonnet marks for the second time the twentieth year of his love, 1347, recapitulating the melancholy truths of poem 212.

1. *what deceit*: What strategy of Love.
2. *unarmed*: Without any rational defenses.
3. *always conquered*: By her loveliness.
5. *but gain*: By dying.

9–11. *I feel . . . / if she turns them*: At a distance, Laura's eyes remind him that he will someday die and must think of his salvation. But when they seek him out, reasonableness flees.

12. *Love with such sweetness*: He dies and yet is held in life by her presence. For this image of wounding and curing, compare Dante's *Paradiso* XXXII, 4–6: "The wound which Mary was to close and heal / she [Eve] there, who sits so lovely at her feet, / would open wider then and prick the flesh."

222 SONNET

Petrarch echoes Dante (*Vita nuova* XXII) in this dialogue on the subject of Laura's sudden absence from the company of her friends.

1. *Happy yet sad*: This motif is repeated in lines 5 and 6 and again in 7 and 8.
   in company yet alone: Incomplete without Laura.
2. *walk along in conversation*: Talking about Laura, their point of comparison.
3. *life . . . death*: Laura's double aspect was the focus of poems 220 and 221.

7. *her lovely company from us*: Petrarch seems to play with the idea that his poems have been suppressed, by him or by others.

9. *Who can*: He defends himself. Cf. Boethius, *Consolatione Philosophiae* III: "Quis legem dat amantibus? Maior lex amor est sibi."

10. *The soul*: The chorus responds.
    wrath and rigor: The righteously indignant female in Laura.
11. *sometimes in us*: When they too disdain him.
14. *watery with dew*: Softened by pity.

223 SONNET

Without her guidance he is fated to sleepless, solitary nights and mornings that never dawn.

1. *the sun bathes*: Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* III, 359.
2. *my mind too*: Cf. 222.13: "her lofty beauty darkened."
5. *to one*: To Laura, silent as death.

8. *I quarrel*: Trying to win some advantage.

9. *rest is nullified*: There is no hope for peace. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* IX, 57: "there would be no returning to the world."

11. *tears sent by the soul*: Lyrical distillations of pain.

12. *dark air*: *L'aura fosca*, a malign emanation.

not me: Corresponding to "rest is nullified."

14. *torment sweet*: All this darkness would be lifted by the return of Laura as he once knew her.

224 SONNET

He bargains with his lady, making a summary defense of himself.

1. *If loving faithfulness*: Beginning a deposition on his own behalf that weighs the human and the divine.

unfeigning heart: Free of deceit and stratagems.

2. *sweet languishing*: Cf. 206.54 and 212.1.

courteous desire: Harnessing the noblest of virtues with love.

4. *blind labyrinth*: Cf. 211.14 and note.

5. *painted on my brow*: Cf. 222.12, where Laura's face darkened, and 220.5, where her words were cut short by painful emotion.

8. *violet's pallor, tint of love*: Love mixed with fear. Cf. Horace, *Odes* III, 10, 14: "Nec tinctus viola pallor amantium."

9. *more than oneself*: He is one who heeds the commandment more than required.

13. *that undo me*: Upset the harmony of his verse.

14. *the blame is yours*: The fault of her having stolen his heart, making half a man of him.

225 SONNET

The sight of Laura triumphant in a cart or singing in a little boat with her friends recalls some of the most notable of Greek figures.

1–2. *Twelve ladies*: Like a latter-day Christ figure with her disciples. Cf. Rev. 12:1.

5. *carried Jason*: The antihero in the legend of the Argonauts, recounted by Apollonius of Rhodes and Catullus.

6. *to the fleece*: The golden hide of a murdered ram, nailed to a tree, which Jason and his band suffered every hardship to procure. Petrarch contrasts a secular church and nobility bent on enriching themselves with the humble example of Laura and her crew of twelve.

7. *or like the shepherd's*: The vessel of Paris, whose abduction of Helen set off the Trojan wars.

10. *my Laurel*: *Laurëa*, symbol of triumph as well as great knowledge.

holy, modest manner: The joining of the little boat image (*barchetta*) and this word "modest" (*schifi*) recalls poem 177, the sonnet from the Ardennes.

11. *sitting to one side*: The sole member of her category.

13. *Happy Automedon*: Achilles' charioteer.

happy Tiphys: The helmsman of the Argo. They appear together in Ovid, *Ars amatoria* I, 5. Cf. also Virgil, *Eclogues* IV, 34 ff.

14. *who steered*: And by extension, those poets who wrote about them.

226 SONNET

Yesterday's triumphant vision, humble as it was, is remembered glory. Today he returns to his lamentations, addressing them to another country that possesses his treasure.

1. *sparrow . . . so alone*: Cf. Ps. 101:7–8, "Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto."

6. *food is gall and poison*: Cf. Ps. 101:10, "Quia cinerem tamquam panem manducabam, et potum meum cum fletum miscebam."

10. *akin to death*: A state of forgetfulness. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 278: "Tum consanguineus Lethi sopor."

11. *that sweet thought*: His *amoroso pensiero.*

12. *Rich, happy country*: He turns like a solitary bird toward the place where Laura is.

13. *green . . . meadows*: Bucolic scenes of his amorous youth.

14. *my treasure*: The young Laura.

227 SONNET

From that same countryside that possesses his treasure comes an aura that stings and overwhelms him. Odd departures from his habitual language of sorrow seem showy on the surface but barely conceal a scatological subtext.

1. *Breeze that surrounds*: *Aura,* this one time, does not spell Laura's name, appearing here without the definite article.

blond and curling locks: Suggestive of forgetfulness and voluptuousness. Cf. 126.56–60.

5. *wasps of love*: One of several unusual expressions in the sonnet. Others are *vacillando* (staggering), *adombre e 'ncespe* (shies and stumbles), and *gorgo* (stream).

6. *feel it . . . and weep*: Experiencing still the effects of the venom of love.

8. *shies and stumbles*: Like a horse that rears at shadows. Cf. Plato's *Phaedo*: "the soul . . . wanders and is confused; the world spins around her, and she is like a drunkard, when she touches change" (trans. Jowett).

12. *O happy air*: *Aer*, without the article, corresponding to *aura* in line 1.

13. *clear running stream*: *Gorgo* (stream) describes a place where quantities of falling water create a whirlpool.

14. *exchange my course*: Purify himself in its motion, perhaps die.

228 SONNET

Written in the earthy style of the preceding sonnet, this poem portrays him as resigned to the nature of things, kneeling before his idol.

4. *tire out . . . every emerald*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* VII, 75 ff.: "Think of . . . fresh emerald the instant it is split— / the brilliant color of the grass and flowers / within that dale would out-shine all of these, / as nature naturally surpasses art."

5. *plowing of my pen*: He cultivates the heart's soil with the probing tip of his pen. The expression *vomer di penna* is not original with Petrarch; it appears in the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville (Curtius).

7. *fragrance reached the heavens*: Cf. 136.14 for similar language in a different context.

8. *no other leaf*: No other divine symbol. Petrarch seems to use the laurel in its Dionysian sense in this and the preceding poem, that is, as a hallucinogen. Cf. Dante, whose poet's crown was composed of myrtle, and in particular Virgil, *Eclogues* II, 54 ff.: "Et vos, o lauri, carpam, et te, proxima myrte; sic positae quoniam suavis miscetis odores."

13. *a happy burden*: His task of cultivating the laurel.

13. *In chaste prayer*: *Oneste*, in language that attempts to match the pure idea of the thing.

14. *something that is holy*: Rather than as the earthly thing itself.

229 SONNET

This sonnet and the next play with the nature of Love's effects in order to reveal the universality of its cause.

1. *I sang once*: He praised her.
now I weep: Expressing the common grief. Cf. 230.10.

3. *not the effect*: The war that followed his falling in love.

4. *only in love with heights*: With the ideal flower in heaven. The roots of his love are so deep they reach the highest.

7. *I suffer equally*: With humility or harshness, depending on whether this sonnet's language is judged to be fine or not so fine.

8. *point of disdain . . . armor*: Even her anger cannot wound him, so relieved is he now of his worldly burden.

9–10. *Let them . . .* : Cf. 207.85–91. Their style is to torment him.

11. *only being happy*: Responding to line 4.

13. *beneath the moon*: The followers of Diana.

14. *so sweet the root*: Cf. 228.9–11.
what for me is bitter: The "effects" of line 3.

230 SONNET

The situation is quickly reversed from what it was in the preceding poem. She has appeared, and he is able to sing.

1. *I wept and now I sing*: Cf. 229.1: "I sang once, now I weep."

2–4. *does not hide . . . / . . . holy ways*: Laura has shown pity to him.

3. *virtuous Love clearly reveals*: An honest and unambiguous exercise of his power to restore.

6. *wind the thread . . . shorter*: He was moved by grief to such degrees of self-sacrifice.

7–8. *that wings . . .* : No amount of praise for her will be adequate to escape the flood and bring him to port.

9. *so full a source*: The root that reaches to heaven. Cf. Eccles. 24:1–22.

10. *far off the shore*: So far from being remedied.

11. *could hardly reach it*: His imagination failed him.

12. *peaceful olive*: A simple hope for truce. Cf. Eccles. 24:9, "Quasi oliva speciosa in campis."

231 Sonnet

Just when a cessation of struggle seems to be possible, Laura's eyes are once more obscured by a dark cloud, and he questions the wisdom of Nature and God.

1. *happy with my fate*: Cf. 229.9–11 and 230.12–14.

3–4. *if other lovers*: A single pain in loving Laura is worth more than a thousand ordinary joys.

5–6. *I won't repent / . . . nor exchange*: The burden of his sorrow has become light, happy, and noble.

7. *so dark and dense a cloud*: An affliction of the eyes.

8. *almost been extinguished*: He has almost lost hope of her recovery.

9. *O Nature*: She who formed Laura in God's image. Cf. 159.1.

10. *such opposing wills*: This line echoes Rom. 13:1, "Non est potestas nisi a Deo."

11. *to do and undo*: Give Laura and take her away.

13. *how can You allow*: Turning from fickle Nature to God, the highest authority.

232 Sonnet

Another kind of darkening of the sight is described here, resulting from overwhelming wrath that on occasion in history led to the death of famous men.

1. *victorious Alexander*: Alexander the Great, whom Solinus named "victor omnium vino et ira victus" for having killed a close friend in a drunken fit of rage.

2. *Philip*: Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander. Insofar as Alexander succumbed to anger, he did not measure up to his father.

3–4. *What good . . . / . . . paint him*: According to Pliny, Alexander ordered that only Pyrgoteles sculpt him in marble, Lysippus in bronze, and Apelles depict him in paint (Durling).

5. *Tydeus*: One of the seven kings of Thebes, deprived of immortality by Athena after sucking out the brains of the dead Melanippus. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXII, 130.

6. *that dying still*: Tydeus first had been mortally wounded by Melanippus.

7. *merely blur*: Cf. 231.7

Sulla: This Roman dictator actually died of rage over a subject's deceits. He emitted such a cry that a tumor in his chest burst (Carducci).

9. *Valentinianus*: The Roman emperor (A.D. 364–375); infuriated by the greed of his legation, he dies of apoplexy.

11. *Ajax*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIII, 384. In grief and anger at the granting of Achilles' armor to Ulysses, this invincible warrior was defeated by his own rage when he committed suicide.

12. *a short madness*: Cf. Seneca, *De ira* I, 1: "Quidam itaque e sapientibus viris iram dixerunt breven insaniam."

12–13. *who can't / control it*: According to Horace, *Epistles* I, 2, 62, he who doesn't learn from it perishes by it.

233 SONNET

He confirms that he was struck with the same dark affliction of the eyes described in the last two sonnets.

1. *from one of*: From her right eye, as he explains in line 9.

3. *dark with pain*: Laura's eyes obscured as they were in poem 231.

4. *there came a force*: *Vertu,* transferring her infirmity to him. Cf. Ovid, *Remedia amoris* 616: "Dum spectant oculi laesos, laeduntur et ipsi; multaque corporibus transitione nocent."

5. *to break the fast*: Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XV, 49, and XIX, 25.

9. *from the right eye*: In astrological terms the right eye of the male signified the sun, the right eye of the female the moon. Laura is the sun, he the moon, now darkening.

10. *to my own right eye*: The eye empowered by virtue.

11. *the illness that delights me*: Because he shares it with Laura—this fading out of light as in an eclipse. Cf. poem 3.

12. *had an intellect*: Laura's darkened eyes sent a message so profound.

13. *like a star shoots*: It fell from heaven like "grace." Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* V, 527: "Coelo ceu saepe refixa trascurrunt, crinemque volantia sidera ducunt."

14. *Nature and Pity*: Cf. 231.9, where Nature is a "merciful, cruel Mother."

234 SONNET

His little room, his bed, and the night give him no rest, and he takes flight, seeking the company of common folk. This sonnet is often compared with poem 35, "Solo e pensoso."

2. *fierce storms*: A refuge from the affairs of the world.

4. *in the daytime I hide*: These events recall *Vita nuova* XXXI, after the death of Beatrice.

5. *O little bed . . . rest*: With *requie* Petrarch may be alluding to the etymological link between *letto* (bed) and *sostegno* (support, prop), the source of mercy as well as a sign of the pity of the Virgin.

6. *grieving urns*: Laura's weeping eyes, seen in his dreams, remind him of mourning and death.

7. *with ivory hands*: Cf. Propertius II, 1: "lyrae carmen digitis percussit eburnis" (Carducci).

11. *high in flight*: Cf. 233.12–14.

12. *I seek the crowd*: Where he can hide his shame.

13. *thought I would*: After all the scorn he has heaped upon them. Cf. Horace, *Odes* III, 3: "Odi profanum vulgus et arceo."

14. *to find myself alone*: With presentiments of loss.

235 Sonnet

In the past he was able to avoid shipwreck by steering his frail craft away from the rock of her pride; now he is threatened far out at sea by storms and darkness.

2. *go beyond my duty*: Venturing into dangerous waters. From here through poem 237 Petrarch pursues the theme of seeking forbidden knowledge, as if he were Ulysses traveling beyond the gates of Hercules.

3. *more than ever*: Cf. 207.21: "I have become annoying, tiresome."

4. *sits as monarch*: The word *monarca* appears just this once in the *Canzoniere.*

8. *blows*: Her harsh judgments.

9. *rain . . . violent gales*: His own tumultuous feelings expressed in recent sonnets.

11. *into my sea*: An abyss that threatens the death of his soul.

12. *to menace others*: More than annoying; at this point he fears for his own salvation.

236 Sonnet

The last sonnet in this series of twenty-two speaks directly to Love, whose dominion over him has driven him into an excess of passion.

1. *err . . . error*: The first two lines of this sonnet are strongly alliterative, and words beginning with "f" are stressed throughout.

2. *chest's afire*: Like the fire of wrath that overwhelms the mind.

3. *pain keeps growing*: These lines play on the various implications of *fallo* and *fallire* in line 1.

4. *vanquished by his pain*: Of his own dark illness.

5. *to fight the heat*: To rein it in with his art, to temper it.

6. *darken her clear face*: Cf. poems 231–233.

8. *in despair*: He has nothing more to lose.

9–11. *Then if against . . .* : His seeking refuge among the common herd in poem 234 may be the venturing off he refers to. Love has driven him into uncharted seas.

11. *the hardest ways*: The difficult upward path but also occasional rocky descents.

14. *forgive herself*: Her own human failings, projected on him.

He fast-forwards in this sestina as if he were undoing acts of creation one by one to arrive at the moment of the world's end.

1–6. *There aren't as many* . . . : Surveying all that a dweller of the earth can learn from his position "under the moon."

8. *to cut in me*: *Scevri*, meaning to separate, after choosing, the mortal from the immortal. Cf. St. Augustine, *Confessiones* XIII, 17–18.

9. *some shore*: So that he might awake like the first man at the dawn of the first day.

11. *they know, those woods*: Because they contain the secret resting place of the moon, which he now seeks.

12. *I, alone*: Speaking of his soul's solitary journey through perilous times.

13. *I've never had tranquility*: Cf. poems 22 and 50.

14. *morning and evening*: Hours that bear traces of the night.

15. *dweller of the woods*: A love poet.

16–18. *before I rest* . . . : His world in history moves toward its own undoing.

16. *have no waves*: In 218.12 he connected such an event with the death of Laura.

17. *sun's light will be furnished*: Reversing nature and giving power to the forces of the night.

21. *nor . . . stabler than the moon*: He waxes and wanes.

23. *sighs from my breast*: The painful effects of his verse.

24. *tremble through the woods*: Send strong reverberations.

25. *Cities are foes*: Seats of intrigue.

friendly are the woods: Where birds may hide and violets grow in secret.

26. *lofty shore*: A high clearing on a mountain at the edge of the woods where he might find the light of the moon.

27. *murmuring of the waves*: His tears mingle with the tears of history.

28. *sweetest silence of the night*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII, 184: "per muta silentia noctis"; and Virgil, *Aeneid* II, 255: "per amica silentia lunae."

29. *wait . . . for evening*: For the last, sweet sleep of the mind.

30. *make way for the moon*: And her influence. According to Aristophanes, a moon that succeeds an aging sun marks a period of political plots and betrayal.

31. *with the lover of the moon*: Sharing the fate of Endymion, eternally youthful, beloved by Selene, goddess of the moon. Enchanted into perpetual sleep, Endymion enjoyed Selene's love each evening on Mount Latmos, lying in dream while she made love to him.

33. *and she, who . . . gives me evening*: Laura, who would have him die before his time.

34. *came with the moon*: Where he awaits her in the moonlit clearing.

35. *for one night*: Like Endymion and Selene, sharing one night eternally.

37. *Above harsh waves*: Vellutello defined these waves as his bitter, hard-edged verse.

38–39. *born by night . . . / a rich shore*: A new style, springing from dream and thoughts of death.

39. *tomorrow evening*: A new beginning. Cf. 214.8.

238 SONNET

Placed between two sestinas, this single sonnet seems to mark an event of extraordinary importance. The illustrious personage who honors Laura with his kiss has not been identified, although he is generally believed to be Charles of Luxemburg, later Emperor Charles IV, who came to Avignon in 1346.

2. *eye of the lynx*: Capable of seeing through mountains and walls, according to Brunetto Latini's *Livres dou Trésor* V, 57.

3. *swift foresight*: A gift for taking providential action.

4. *worthy to dwell*: His regal position graced by the nobility of his character.

5. *Finding many a lady*: Cf. poems 218, 222, and 225. This large company recalls the sixty ladies of Dante's *Vita nuova* VI.

8. *the best among . . . lovely faces*: Laura.

9. *The others*: Wealthier and more aristocratic than the humble Laura.

10. *with a gesture*: A regal, providential choice.

14. *strange, sweet action*: A unique act of deference to one so humble, young, and beautiful.

239 SESTINA

At least two elements mark this sestina as a departure: first, Laura is clearly named twice; and second, she is set apart from the ever-renewing spring breeze (*l'aura*) as an alpine peak beyond the reach of love and poetry.

5. *stirred*: Inspired.

6. *to my notes*: To his own music or poetry.

7. *such gentle notes*: Like the natural sounds of spring smoothing her roughness.

8. *sweeten Laura*: This is the first naming of his love not disguised in some manner by spelling. In poem 5 she was Laureta, in poem 225 Laurëa, elsewhere *l'aura*.

9. *reasoning*: Using the force of argument to soften her.

11. *before love blossoms*: Before his love poems have their miraculous effect.

12. *who never cared for rhymes or for my verses*: She whose soul is immune to changes of climate will not respond to love poetry. Cf. Virgil, *Eclogues* II, 6: "O crudelis Alexi, nihil mea carmina curas."

15. *to make humble that soul*: To bring her feelings finally into play.

16. *rough mountain*: A Virgilian image, *Aeneid* VI, 470–71: "Nec magis incepto vultum sermone movetur, quam si dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes."

17. *leaves and flowers*: Lesser souls than hers (Carducci).

18. *a greater force*: Of her immutability.

24. *to draw from life*: Draw his soul upward to Heaven.

28. *There's nothing can't be done*: Cf. Virgil, *Eclogues* VIII, 69; and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII, 179–214, for the powers of the imagination.

29. *charm even serpents*: Cf. Pliny, *Historia naturalis* XXVIII, 4: "serpentes contrahique Marsorum cantu etiam in nocturna quiete."

30. *decorate the frost*: Coax spring out of winter.

31. *The slopes*: Beneath the rough mountain, where he is.

33. *amorous notes*: Like the laughter of flowers. Cf. 127.71–90.

34. *our cruel fortune*: Speaking to his soul.

greater force: Greater than the wit he would gather in lines 26–27.

36. *lame ox*: In the Augustinian sense, perhaps—with a faltering evangelism. Cf. note to 50.58.

37. *In nets . . . flowers*: Acts of magic.

38. *deaf and rigid soul*: The pitiless Laura.

39. *who prizes neither*: The fault is hers; more's the pity.

240 SONNET

With this sonnet a series of twenty-four begins, all of which were added to the collection late in Petrarch's life. The preceding sestina and poems 240–243 were included between 1371 and early 1373. Poems 244–263 were added in the last year of his life (Wilkins, 1951, pp. 176–83). It was during this period that he described his rhymes to Pandolfo Malatesta as "nugellas meas vulgares."

3–4. *complete / faithfulness*: Only his faith, in fact, guides him through the full round of experience.

8. *I am forced to follow*: Into error by overwhelming ardor, but also by the limitations of the verse line. Tassoni found an earlier poet, Ugolin Buzzuola, who used the rare form *sego* (follow) in "Di me non t'ungi, che passion non sego."

9–12. *You, with that heart . . .*: Laura. Cf. line 2, *appo voi*. In these lines he gives an example of the skill required to put such complicated thoughts all in one place by ordering his clauses appositionally, enhancing them with epithets, as he did in lines 2 and 3. Cf. 239.25–28.

13–14. *What choice*: Cf. 87.9–11 and 123.14 for other imagined opinions of Laura.

14. *lovely*: Cf. Ovid, *Heroides* XX: "Aut esses formosa minus, peterere modeste; audaces facie cogimur esse tua." For numerous antecedents, in earlier Italian and Provençal verse, of this theme of the lady's irresistible beauty, see Zingarelli.

241 SONNET

In tones of utmost courtesy he describes to her how she might alter her present harsh stance toward him.

1. *That lofty lord*: Love.

6. *advance his case*: To make its outcome sure.

7. *made of mercy*: The sight of her tearful eyes. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXIX, 43: "like arrow-shafts whose tips are barbed with pity."

8. *from both sides*: "Here and there." Love balances amorous passion with compassion, ardor with restraint.

assails and stabs: Ardor wounds and pity overwhelms him.

9. *flame and fire*: All his unbridled desire.

10. *tears that misery distills*: When he reflects, pity makes his response more civil. Petrarch echoes a passage in Dante, *Purgatorio* (XV, 94 ff.) where Pisistratus turns away his wife's wrath by giving her a soft answer.

11. *your sad state*: Laura's grief. Cf. 3.9–11.

12. *two fountains*: His eyes..

14. *my desire grows*: The one reinforcing the other.

242 Sonnet

In a variation on the dialogue form, he speaks to his heart with a divided mind. This sonnet refers to a significant event in the *Canzoniere*, one to which he often returns in his thoughts: his desertion of Laura.

1. *Look at that hill*: Traditionally believed to be a midpoint between Avignon and Vaucluse—Caumont—where Laura was born.

4. *into a lake*: Pooling with tears.

5. *glad to be alone*: To be relieved of his heart's pain.

6. *if it is not time*: The unique phrasing of this line was noted by Carducci; Zingarelli and Leopardi read it to say, "se fosse ancor tempo." Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XI, 89–90.

8. *prescient*: his heart knows before his mind how their love is faring.

10. *talk to your heart*: The voice of his conscience speaks.

12. *highest wish*: His original high enterprise of praising Laura.

14. *hid inside*: His essential core hidden from his own sight.

243 Sonnet

Cut off from her and his heart, he falls into despondency for his lost powers.

1. *Green hill*: Cf.242.1.

2. *where she sits now*: Cf. poems 100, 111, 125.22, 126.32, and 129.5 for descriptions of Laura seated.

4. *outdoes all fame*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XI, 94–96.

6. *showed good sense*: Cf. 242.12–14.

7. *goes counting now*: In its beating it numbers the golden days of his early love.

8. *the wetness of my eyes*: Cf. *Purgatorio* XI, 115, where Dante echoes Isa. 40:6–7, "What shall I cry? That all mankind is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades."

11. *so worn out*: So limp. In the seventeenth century Tassoni saw in this image a man on all fours, unable to stand upright (Carducci).

12. *She smiles*: It has been a long time since Laura smiled, even in his imagination. Cf. 172.9–11.

13. *I'm stone*: Unable to speak out, like one of Medusa's victims.
you're paradise: The verdant hill of line 1.

244 SONNET

This sonnet responds to one by Giovanni Dondi of Padua (b. 1318), with whom Petrarch corresponded beginning in 1370. A physician and mathematician, Dondi invented and erected on the tower of Padua a clock that traced more than 200 rotations of the stars. Dondi's sonnet asks for the master's advice in matters of love. Petrarch responds using the same rhymes.

1. *terrified by worse*: Afraid of the future, like a horse shying at shadows. Cf. 227.8.

2. *so broad and smooth a way*: They are both being pushed from behind by events into a frightening future.

3. *your same frenzied road*: Petrarch plays on the word *frenesia*, whose Latin root means bridle (Greek *phreno*, mind). They are like reluctant animals spurred and restrained by their thoughts at the same time.

4. *with hard thoughts*: Like the bit in the mouth—painful.
ramble: The word *vaneggio* can apply to the raving of a seer.

5. *for peace or war*: That he means this in a political sense is suggested by his echoing poem 128 in the next line.

6. *heavy is the loss*: Corresponding to war.
cruel the shame: Corresponding to peace. Cf. 128.68.

9. *of that great honor*: Dondi had appealed to Petrarch to speak out as Petrarch himself had appealed to another in poem 28.

11. *healthy eye see wrong*: Dondi had complained of an inability to see, hear, or otherwise trust his senses and the world around him.

245 SONNET

After his wry admission of artistic and political impasse in the preceding sonnet, this seems to describe the passing on of a sacred legacy to a younger generation. The traditional interpretation is that the two lovers here are Petrarch and Laura, the donor undertermined. Zingarelli suggested Dante or Cino da Pistoia.

1. *Two roses*: Red for the lover, signifying courage and sacrifice; perhaps white for the maiden, as in poem 246, signifying purity.
picked in paradise: The green hill of 243.12–14.

2. *the other day*: Only a short time ago. Cf. 214.1–12.
first of May: May was the Virgin's month in the Christian calendar.

3. *a sweet gift*: The words stand free and clear syntactically, like an offering.
lover old and wise: One who has kept his prescient heart in the paradise of his youth. Cf. poem 243.

4. *shared equally*: One to each, a portion.

7. *stream of light*: Of understanding.
sparkles lovingly: Trembling on the verge of joy or pity.

10. *and sighing*: Star-crossed as they are.

11. *he then turned round*: He retired.

13. *weary heart still fears*: The poet in the present still remembers how he felt on that occasion.

14. *Oh happy eloquence*: Of both words and roses.

246 SONNET

Inspiration once more flows. The next three sonnets celebrate another and different flowering of his adoration, pure and candid.

1–2. *The aura . . . / . . . laurel . . . golden*: Variants of the name of Laura.

2. *hair*: *Crine* appears just this once in the *Canzoniere*.

3. *its aspects new and delicate*: Cf. 239.1–6, his most recent point of new beginnings.

3–4. *turns . . . / souls into pilgrims*: Stealing them away into exile.

5. *Whiteness of rose . . . thorns*: The simplicity of Laura's beauty is created out of a wasteland of suffering.

6. *when*: Cf. poem 220, where similar questions are asked: where, what, and whence?

7. *O living Jove*: Christ.

9. *public loss*: To all the world.

10. *without sun*: Since poem 237 he has foreshadowed her loss.

12–13. *and my soul . . .*: His soul and all his senses are caught up in her perfection, like "pilgrims wandering from their bodies."

14. *sweet perfection*: He starts anew with his single white rose.

247 SONNET

To praise her is a task for stylists on the level of the greatest orators and poets, not just one humble lover like himself.

1. *Someone*: Some skeptic who has not seen her.

2. *my style is wrong*: Castelvetro amended this to say "deceitful" (*bugiardo*).

5. *I think the opposite*: The terms of this sonnet are just subtle enough to make one doubt him, beginning with "perhaps" in line 1.

6. *disdains the humble words*: Considers them, notwithstanding their apparent hyperbole, too slight for her notice.

7. *higher, finer ones*: A style even more sophisticated than he has shown so far.

8. *come and gaze on her*: Come see her in person, but also, "look closely at my words."

10–11. *all Arpinum and Athens, / Mantua, Smyrna*: Birthplaces of Cicero, Demosthenes, Virgil, and Homer, respectively.

11. *one lyre and the other*: The Latin and Greek languages.

12. *A mortal tongue*: The one in which he is presently writing—vernacular Italian.

13–14. *draws and drives / his tongue*: Forces his words into a style so "wrong" that it appears to say the opposite.

14. *but destiny*: Along with the pushing and pulling of Love, the force of circumstance determines the forward thrust of his language.

248 SONNET

If he cannot entice the blind world to come gaze on her virtue, then perhaps some seeker of highest truth might want to see her before it is too late. Petrarch seems almost to be hawking his wares in this sonnet.

3. *sole sun*: Laura unique, apart, and the only one who matters to him.
4. *the blind world*: Cf. 119.46–53. Although the world gives lip service to virtue, its real motive is to seek pleasure.
5. *come quickly now*: To gaze on her in her passing.
7. *kingdom of the gods*: Amongst the angels, the souls of the greatest mortals.
10. *all regal-mannered ways*: Of one first among women.
11. *joined in one body*: Modeled by the divine fabricator.
12. *verse is dumb*: Responding to 247.2–3, "my style is wrong / in making her beyond all others gracious."
13. *talent overcome*: Of total absence of his sun.
14. *weep forever*: For her disappearance from this world.

249 SONNET

Certain aspects of his beloved Laura at his last sight of her, when remembered together, assail him with dark thoughts. Chiari dates this sonnet 1347–48, Black Death years in Europe.

2. *the day I left*: Cf. 242.2: "there yesterday we left her."
   sad and pensive: "Sighing gently" in 246.1.
6. *like a rose*: Cf. poems 245 and 246.
7. *neither gay nor sad*: In a kind of limbo of emotion. Cf. the "new and delicate aspects" of poem 246.
8. *like one who fears*: Has a presentiment of an unhappy future. Zingarelli cites Dante, *Inferno* IV, 84.
9. *all her elegance*: Corresponding to "humble presence" in line 5.
10. *her pearls*: Her charming youthful qualities and worldly adornments.
11. *her laughing*: Cf. 245.10.
13. *and now sad omens*: Signs that the *soverchio lume* of 248. 13 has indeed gone out.
   blackest thoughts: Of total absence of light.

250 SONNET

The cause of his anxiety is revealed in a dream in which Laura speaks to him, making undeniable what he only sensed before.

3. *now*: Three states of mind are evoked: dreaming then, remembering now, and a middle ground in which that dream is reinterpreted.

scares and saddens me: Cf. the premonitions of poem 249.

4. *I have no defense*: Because fear has been added to grief, usurping the place of joy.

6. *mixed with serious pain*: *Grave dolor*, an expression of hers he has not mentioned before.

10. *left . . . your eyes in tears*: Reflecting her pity and pain.

12. *I could not tell you then*: Cf. 119.99–100: "'And now I've told you / as much as you can understand in brief.'"

nor did I want to: Because he wasn't ready to know.

13. *tried and true*: Proven by his own experience. He is ready to know now what she did not tell him then.

14. *Don't ever hope*: The absence of the word "again" is puzzling, suggesting that Laura always was a figment of his imagination. However, in 253.2, it is provided. Cf. also 328.14.

251 SONNET

Disbelief is his reaction to the dream of the last sonnet. Can his mind have deceived him? And why has no one else noted her passing?

1. *Oh miserable . . . vision*: The dream of poem 250.

2. *holy light is out*: Her bountiful grace spent.

3. *before her time*: At a young age, before fulfilling her promise.

6. *than hearing it from her*: He speaks ironically of talking to himself, of his prophecies not having been taken seriously. Dante made a similar comment in *Purgatorio* IX, 25–27: "'Could this be the only place / the eagle strikes? Perhaps he does not deign / to snatch his prey from anywhere but here."

7. *not consent*: As they conspired in her birth, let them not in her dissolution. Cf. 159.1–4.

8. *my sad opinion*: A truth not yet demonstrated, only dreamed of by the poet.

11. *gives me life*: Sustains him, as in poem 207.

honor to the world: Making the world worthy of and by her presence.

13. *lovely home*: Her beautiful body.

252 SONNET

The threat of Laura's loss, as yet unconfirmed, acts as an incentive for self-criticism.

3. *release my burden*: He vents the pain spilling over into his dreams.

with all his tools: Literally "files," the tormenting thoughts that assail him.

6. *their primal light*: What he saw at the "first assault."

7. *ah, what am I to think*: Against what standard will he measure himself?

8. *endless weeping*: Through eternity.

9. *taking what belongs to it*: Laura was only lent to the world.

11. *whose sun it is*: If not illuminated by that fair, holy face.
12. *perpetual war*: With his presentiments and his hopes.
13. *what I used to be*: Cf. 1.4.

253 SONNET

Whatever little genuine sweetness he has been granted has always been cut short by Fortune.

2. *ever . . . again*: Fear of her disappearance from the world still lingers. Cf. 250.14.
5. *harsh fate*: Her face is a white rose gathered from thorns. Cf. 220.2 and 246.5.
7. *O closed betrayal . . . fraud*: Those locks of gold and Love's deceptions, now seen in another light.
8. *brings me only pain*: The darkness and doubt plaguing him in recent sonnets.
11. *honest sweetness*: A pure, candid expression of love rather than a habitual betrayal and fraud.
12. *to scatter any good*: To disperse his amorous forces.
13. *horses or ships*: Offensive means, here the defenders of Laura's virtue.
14. *by Fortune*: Ready to carry him away from her aginst his will.

254 SONNET

Hope that she lives continues to pierce him.

1. *hear no news*: He seeks some sign that the frightening vision of poem 250 is false.
2. *my sweet enemy*: An epithet that has not appeared since poem 206.
3. *don't know what to think*: Cf. 252.7.
4. *is pierced*: *Mi puntella*, not quite killing him; that is, alternately delivering the wound and then resurrecting him.
5. *Such beauty harmed another*: He refers to the myth of Callisto, "the most beautiful," a nymph Jove ravished and then turned into a bear to protect her from Juno's wrath. Later killed by Diana, Callisto was set among the constellations as the She-Bear. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II, 381 ff.
9. *rather a sun*: He corrects himself. Cf. 255.5.
if this be so: If Laura has been taken from earth.
12. *from my harm*: From his "sweet enemy."
13. *My little fable has . . . been told*: *Favola* is meant in the classical sense of "little drama." Cf. 1.10.
14. *my time is filled*: Prematurely, like Laura's.

255 SONNET

The hour of dawn is more fitting to his love now than the passionate nights of ordinary lovers.

3. *night redoubles*: He plays on the coupling of happy lovers.
woes and weeping: The sequel to his dreams.

5. *those two suns*: The rising sun and the memory of Laura's beauty fixed like the morning star in his mind.

6. *will open*: As lovers open to each other.
two Orients: *Levanti*, two dawnings.

7–8. *so similar* . . . : The one reflecting that of the other. In a political sense, he may envision a just ruler emerging beside a reborn Church. Cf. poem 100 and notes.

9. *first boughs*: Laura during his first transformation.

10. *in my heart their roots were sunk*: Love of poetry was born in him simultaneously with his faith. Cf. 23.31–40, and 214.7–12.

12. *opposing hours*: Evening and morning.

256 Sonnet

Perhaps his sweet enemy is only hiding.

1. *take my vengeance*: Force her to listen.

2. *with glances and with words*: Her expression of pity and predictions of death. Cf. 250.5–8.

7. *like a lion*: Cf. 56.7–8 and 202.6. The roar of a lion is a warning to mankind to prepare for the coming of Christ. Cf. Gen. 49:9, "ut leo, et quasi leaena: quis suscitabit eum?"

10. *such a knot*: The soul's ties with the body.

12. *if some time*: In the far future, when he is dead. He speaks to posterity.

13. *speaking*: His soul in the form of his poetry being read and understood.

14. *break her sleep*: Corresponding to "take my vengeance," that is, his warnings might make a difference.

257 Sonnet

He remembers how he experienced within himself a strange transport when Love—Laura—held out her hand.

2. *were fixed*: On the beauty of his first love, her face.

4. *that honored hand*: Blocking the sight of her face (Leopardi), or held out as a sign of peace (Zingarelli). For other references to the hand, see 72.55, the series 199–201, and 208.12.

5. *fish on hook*: Fixed on her beauty. Petrarch plays on the homonyms *amo* (hook) and *amo* (I love).

6. *living as example*: Laura's mortal self. The original "vivo esempio" is Christ.

7. *a young bird*: Cf. 207.33–39.

8. *turn to truth*: The meaning of his life to be found deep in those eyes.

10. *cleared its own way*: His mind made an intuitive leap toward understanding. Cf. Boethius, *Consolatione Philosophiae* III, poem 11.

12. *between one glory and the other*: His soul, caught in time, between her face and her hand.

14. *supernatural sweetness*: What sublime potential lay in that moment.

258 SONNET

The memory of her sparkling eyes and heavenly speech gives him double pleasure.

1. *living sparks*: The tinder in her eyes that aroused his love.
3. *wise heart, sighing*: Her eyes and her heart were in synchrony.
4. *lofty words*: *Eloquenzia*—persuasive.
8. *under the change . . . harshness*: Referring to the first day, the change she wrought in him with her glance, and that moment's significance.
9. *nourished . . . grief and pain*: Caught in the snare like the bird of poem 257.
10. *power of habitualness*: His habit of expecting the worst based on her "accustomed harshness."

11–12. *weak / at the mere taste*: Cf. poems 2 and 3; and Dante, *Vita nuova* XI and XII (the effect on Dante both of Beatrice's greeting and her denial of it).

14. *often in between*: Between her spoken words and the thought communicated in her glance (*vive faville*). Cf. 257.12.

259 SONNET

Kind Fortune compels him to return to Avignon where the writing hand is put to the service of Laura. Tassoni read this sonnet as a response to another poet who may have questioned Petrarch's motives.

2. *and the woods know this*: Witness his contemplations.
3. *deaf and devious minds*: Deaf to poetry, jealous and suspicious of truth. The word *loschi* (devious) appears just once in the *Canzoniere.*
6. *sweet air of Tuscany*: His native land and Arcadia. Cf. poem 139.
7. *Sorgue*: The source of waters and inspiration in Vaucluse.
8. *help me weep and sing*: By imitation of its murmuring sound.
10. *pushes me back*: Against his natural bent.

to where I fill with anger: To Avignon, the modern "Babylon."

11. *lovely treasure*: Laura.

in the mud: Her luster dimmed by everything worthless and unlovely, sunk in formlessness. *Fango* was a common disparagement of materialism.

12–13. *this hand . . . / . . . made friends*: Found a useful object for his anger.

13. *perhaps justly so*: He speaks of a rare time when he and Fortune were in agreement.

260 SONNET

He returns to an old theme: Laura's unique position in the world. This sonnet draws comparisons with several of history's most tragic female figures.

1. *In such a star*: That ruled the day he first saw her.
3. *nests of Love*: Her eyes.

7–8. *not even she . . .*: More beautiful than Helen, whose seizure brought about the war between Greece and Troy.

8. *final shrieks*: Those of the Trojan women grieving as Troy burned.

9. *not the lovely Roman who with iron*: More beautiful than Lucretia, raped by the tyrant Tarquinius. Lucretia committed suicide in the presence of her husband and father rather than endure the loss of her honor. Terquinius was later expelled and the Roman Repubic established.

11. *Polyxena*: Betrothed of Achilles, sacrificed on his funeral pyre after the hero was slain by Paris.

Hypsipyle: Queen of Lemnos, seduced and abandoned by Jason during the voyage of the Argonauts.

Argeia: Wife of Polynices, son of Oedipus and Jocasta. Argeia wore the necklace of Harmonia, a guarantee for misfortune.

12. *This excellence*: This beauty and nobility in misfortune.

14. *long in coming*: Urgently awaited.

261 SONNET

Women with high aspirations may learn from her manners and conduct, but her true beauty can be found only in her eyes.

4. *my enemy*: Because her ideal beauty attracts him while her perfection pushes him away as unworthy.

called by the world my lady: So described by those who do not see the whole significance of her being. He cannot exclude himself from their number, being, as he is, in love.

6. *wed to charming ways*: Zingarelli calls these qualities of charm (*leggiadria*) and chastity (*onestà*) irreconcilable. Nonetheless, Petrarch seeks to reconcile them throughout the *Canzoniere*.

9–14. *and there the speech . . .*: He sets up a triad of beauty, honesty, and the medium of speech, speech being the bond that holds the two extremes together. These tercets may be a gloss on Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, where language is denied the power to capture more than a spark of the supreme light.

10. *the lovely silences*: The truth of her nature is withheld or is too deep for understanding.

13. *sweet rays*: Her inner light—intelligence. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, 85.

262 SONNET

In this dialogue between a stern young maiden and her mother, the topic of womanly honor is pursued further, with the poet praising the uncompromising stance of the maiden.

1. *"Precious is life . . . ."*: This voice has been identified as that of an older respected woman friend of Laura's, as her real mother, or as Mother Nature speaking on behalf of the life of her creation.

4. *not without virtue*: *Onestà* is understood to be all-inclusive, not a division.

5. *allows her honor to be taken*: Chooses dishonor in order to preserve her life.

6. *not a lady*: Cf. 261.4. A true lady will somehow maintain her spiritual integrity. *or alive*: This line seems to respond to questions he has raised since 250.14.

7. *appear to be*: The appearance of integrity suggests its opposite, fraud and deceit.

8. *more than death*: A living death, perhaps like the life of an honorable person brought low among evil men.

11. *Lucretia's story . . .*: Cf. 260.9 and note. Lucretia's beauty also derived from the truth of her harsh and grim example, by which she was delivered from life.

12. *Let all philosophers*: The poet is speaking.

13. *their ways will all be low*: That Petrarch is disparaging the Scholastics has been suggested by some.

14. *hers alone*: This maiden's tragic path to glory.

263 SONNET

The concluding sonnet of this series of twenty-four is the first in the *Canzoniere* in which Petrarch uses the familiar *tu* form with his lady. She is the "triumphant tree," the laurel, whose integrity mimics the divine.

In Vatican manuscript 3195 this sonnet is followed by several blank pages. The great canzone, poem 264, follows, its initial letter large and shaped by Petrarch in the same manner as that of poem 1, indicating that it marked the beginning of Part Two of a two-part work. Whether Part One actually concludes with this sonnet or was meant to be followed by other works has never been established. The presence of blank pages in Vat. Lat. 3195 was cited by Wilkins as evidence that Petrarch had in mind other poems for inclusion. However, blank pages appeared in earlier manuscripts also, increasing in number with time from 1 1/2 (Chigi), to 3, to 5, to 7 in the final form. (See Wilkins 1951 on the Chigi, Malatesta, Quiriniano, and final forms.) As for whether the sonnet can be regarded as conclusive, this poem and several preceding it seem to make an ironic statement about living at the cusp of disaster, culminating with the image of the solitary poet still defending the virtue of the laurel tree.

2. *the honor*: Cf. 161.5–8.

5. *cares for nothing but*: Cf. poems 260–262, where honor and integrity have restored Laura to the highest state, a context in which all her other qualities may be savored.

8. *nor can deceit avail*: Cf. 262.6–8: "if some appear to be . . . ."

9. *Gentility of blood*: This tercet and the next demonstrate lines 5–6. Such a dismissal of noble origins is a significant departure from poetic tradition. Cf. poem 4.

11. *you equally despise*: This departs from Petrarch's own earlier efforts to adorn his humble Laura with precious materials. Cf. poem 220 for one example.

13. *bores you*: Her mortal existence wears on her, as do pearls and gold.

264 CANZONE

The year before Laura's death in 1348, Petrarch began to assemble a new collection of his love poems that fell into two parts, with this canzone as the opening poem of

Part II. Through subsequent collections, and in the final manuscript, Vat. Lat. 3195, he maintained this division in spite of the fact that Laura's death, not announced until poem 267, seemed to mark a plausible dividing point. Some editors (such as Carducci and Ferrari) have separated the *Canzoniere* into the "life" and "death" of Madonna Laura at poem 267, although Petrarch himself did not do so at any point. What makes this canzone unique, however, is the very disappearance of a realized Laura from its lines. She is evoked neither as natural beauty nor as a moral vision but prevails rather as an ineradicable factor, an inborn trait with which the poet suddenly finds himself alone. The vision of self-sacrifice that concludes Part I had created, it seems, the need for a complete reappraisal: hence he makes his confession here, like St. Augustine before him, "not in words and sounds made by the tongue alone, but with the voice of my soul and in my thoughts which cry aloud to you, O Lord" (*Confessiones* X, 2).

1. *I go on thinking*: Cf. 129.1–2: "From thought to thought . . . / Love leads me on."

4. *different kind of grief*: Before he grieved because Laura disdained him; now he feels deprived of God's grace (Castelvetro).

6. *a thousand times*: In every love song.

9. *received no help*: No force strong enough has interceded for him.

11–13. *and it is only just*: Cf. 105.12–13; Dante, *Purgatorio* XIX, 118–26.

14. *Those arms stretched out*: Those of Christ crucified.

17. *how others ended*: Going to Hell.

19. *it declares*: Unequivocally, like the voice of his conscience.

22. *with what dishonor*: As he fails to act decisively.

24–25. *every last root / of pleasure*: Worldly good.

26. *let you breathe*: Free of greedy desire.

27. *have long been tired*: Demonstrated by his attacks on others in his verse.

29. *a gift*: Fame. This voice argues against a false sweetness (desire for fame) that leads nowhere and for a different sweetness (desire for God), both generated by Laura.

treacherous world: Which deceives with its promises.

40. *still to be born*: Into a less unworthy age. If she were to come later, a more peaceful world would be better able to appreciate her.

42. *the image of her rushing down*: Cf. 72.43–45.

44. *could not enter*: Cf. 2.8.

45. *false flame*: The desire for fame lit simultaneously with the desire for good.

46–47. *the day . . . / never comes*: Earthly fulfillment being only one part of the true good, false in the sense of incomplete. Cf. Boethius, *Consolatione Philosophiae* III, 10.

49–54. *gazing on the heavens . . .*: In contrast with partial mortal pleasures, the voice describes a complete eternal joy.

53. *a mere glance, a word . . . a song*: Earthly love, poetry, and music being expressions of the eternal harmony of the spheres.

55. *another thought*: Inner, not spoken aloud. Cf. line 19.

bittersweet: Desire for his verse to be read and understood.

56. *delightful weight*: His love of Laura that holds his soul in this life.

62. *grow back the stronger*: His love is strengthened by rejection and defeats. Cf. 241.12–14.

65. *share one grave*: That neither his love nor he will achieve lasting fame.

68–69. *Latin or Greek tongues / . . . all wind: Vento,* rumor. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XI, 100.

71. *hoarding what in a moment scatters:* Words and memories of the meaning of words, ever changing.

72. *truth . . . lies:* Preserve the purity of the word, cleansing it of error.

73. *that other passion:* Love of her eyes. This begins another line of thought from an inner voice of experience.

79. *with reins:* The purity of her eyes acts as a restraint against excess of sophistication or crudeness.

81–82. *oil / my boat:* Try to make it seaworthy and steady on some more worthy course.

83. *tied . . . by those two knots:* Conflicting loves.

84. *from other knots:* Other wordly entanglements, such as power and riches.

87. *wipe from my face this shame:* This weakness of purpose and servitude to another. Cf. lines 12–13, 21–22, 45–47, and 73–76.

90. *have no weapons:* "either wit nor might" (l. 80).

91–92. *I know myself . . . / . . . truth:* Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII, 90–91: "I see what I am doing; I shall never / Be fooled by ignorance of the truth, but love" (Medea speaking).

93. *blocks the path of honor:* Forces the lover to improvise by taking a less praiseworthy route.

95–98. *I feel enter my heart . . .*: Although he is defenseless against his own weakness, he is able to disdain it in his verse so that it becomes part of an integrated whole.

108. *she pleased me, and herself:* She narcissistic, he obsessed with her beauty. Cf. poems 45 and 125.46.

110. *When tenderly I came*: When his little amorous fable began.

112. *to start against myself:* Rebelling against his best interest.

113. *my body's veil:* The senses.

119. *loss makes him wary and wise*: As one who has spent too much money and must now count every coin.

120. *I think back to the point:* As far back as poem 2.

124. *the other will not free me*: His twofold love came first from her eyes and second from her grieving appearance. This refers to her eyes.

126. *it dares bargain*: Cf. Petrarch's *Secretum* III; and St. Augustine, *Confessiones* VI, 12.

128. *snow that's turned to ice*: Weighted down by so many changes of season as to be almost glacial.

130. *I've wound the spool:* His tapestry will be so long, so wide, and not more so, that is, *ordita.*

131. *good length of my short thread*: Using up his materials.

132. *a weight:* Cf. lines 55–58.

134. *Death at my side*: Cf. line 126.

135. *I seek new rules*: Begin again in a wholly new context.

136. *cling to the worst:* Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphses* VII, 20–21: "I see, approving, / Things that are good, and yet I follow worse ones." With this image he returns to the beginning of the poem and the thoughts that seize him.

265 SONNET

As if all the self-abasement and desire for improvement of poem 264 were "wind," this sonnet surrenders itself once again to his tenacious craving. Noting that Arnaut Daniel influenced this poetry, Petrarch himself dated it 21 September 1350, "the third hour of Tuesday, St. Matthew's Day." Laura died in 1348, yet she seems very much alive in these lines.

1. *a cruel will*: Cf. 264.62: "killing it makes it grow back the stronger."

4. *shall have my spoils*: The conflict between the sweet voice and the harsh will be won by the less worthy opponent, and her "form" will end up lacking soul or humanity.

bring her little honor: Will not have the ring of truth.

7. *I weep*: His grieving is undifferentiated.

11. *wear its way*: His modus operandi: persistence, constancy, even contumacy.

266 SONNET

This sonnet, written to Giovanni Colonna in 1345, mentions the eighteenth year of his love—two years earlier, therefore, than his last "anniversary" sonnet, poem 221. On a graph, these commemorations show a zigzag of advances and retreats that may comment on the poet's experience of his time. In 1366 Petrarch transcribed in Vatican 3195 a sonnet written by Sennuccio del Bene in response to these words.

1. *Dear lord of mine*: Giovanni Colonna.

3–4. *but fortune now . . . / . . . overthrows me:* In February of 1345 Petrarch fled Parma because of war, injuring himself in a fall from a horse, and for some months lived a generally disrupted existence (*Familiares* V, 10).

7. *two lights*: The two people dearest to him are Laura and the cardinal himself.

11. *it was I, myself*: Cf. 264.111–112.

12. *A Laurel*: Symbol of his ever-renewing love for Laura.

a Column noble: The cardinal, as well as the Colonna family.

13. *fifteen years*: The length of time he has known Giovanni Colonna.

eighteen the other: He first saw Laura in 1327.

14. *I've kept inside me*: Kept in his heart, corresponding to line 2.

267 SONNET

Here Laura's death is finally acknowledged, although it is not until the next canzone that the words "Madonna è morta" appear. Petrarch himself noted in his copy of Virgil's works that she dies on 6 April 1348 and he received word of it the following 19 May. He also recorded the date he first saw her, the same 6 April at the same hour of the day twenty-one years before. Foreshadowing of Laura's disappearance from the world began well in advance of this sonnet, however, alternating with reappearances and "lapses" in chronology that continue to puzzle readers. This physical death scatters to the wind the poet's hope of possessing her, but her power of attraction will endure in other forms.

4. *could tame*: It is he she tamed and filled with courage.
5–6. *arrow / of death*: Of Love. Cf. 2.7.
7. *Royal soul*: Highest good.
worthiest of all: Cf. poems 225, 260, and 263.
8. *joined us so late*: Born into a corrupt age that could not appreciate her.
11. *I suffer less*: Any other pain is insignificant.
13. *the time I left*: Cf. 250.9.
14. *all those words were scattered*: She did not seem to hear them.

268 CANZONE

This canzone mourning the death of Laura was painstakingly revised over the years, beginning with its first drafting sometime before 28 November 1349 and ending with its transcription in 1356. The poetry shows the effects of a long period of reflection, his pain having been internalized and made habitual in a new mode of dignified resignation. Technically, the canzone shows great simplicity and clarity of design. Petrarch asks Love's advice and receives it: do not abandon the high goal you set for yourself upon first loving Laura. Dante's influence pervades his argument here, particularly the events of the *Vita nuova*.

1. *Can you advise me, Love?:* Cf. 264.135: "I seek new rules by which to lead my life." Petrarch may have found Catullus's line, "Ibimus quaesitum: verum, ne ipsi teneamur, Formido. Quid ago? Da, Venus, consilium," in Gellius, *Nocte atticae* XIX, 9, 25 (Zingarelli).

4. *My lady's dead*: In 1351 Petrarch crossed out the word *morta* and substituted for it *gita*, as if his lady had gone on a trip. It is worth mentioning the change because the poet includes it and dates it with careful attention to avoiding "ambiguity." Dante had used *gita* after Beatrice's death in the *Vita nuova* XXXII.

6. *interrupt these worst of times*: The inherent violence of the word "interrupt" suggests to some an act of suicide. On the other hand, his natural death from grief might startle his contempories enough to make them notice the death of Laura.

7. *I cannot hope*: If Laura was virtue personified, he has lost hope of meeting her embodiment in the world. Cf. 250.9–14.

16. *wrecked our ship*: Cut off their hopes for salvation.

17. *seen the sun turn dark*: Cf. 3.1–4. According to Petrarch's notation in his copy of Virgil, Laura died the same hour he first saw her, Good Friday between 6 and 9 A.M. (the hour Christ died on the Cross, according to the Vulgate).

19. *could ever match my sorrowful condition*: Reminiscent of Dante's "Li occhi dolenti" in *Vita nuova* XXXI, and also of Virgil, *Aeneid* II, 362: "Quis . . . possit lacrymis aequare labores?"

20. *blind, ungrateful world*: Corresponding to "these worst of times" in line 6.

23–28. *Your glory's fallen* . . .: The glory of Laura, her virtue and beauty, were always a thing new and unique to the world, known in their essence only to him.

23. *you do not see it*: Cf. 261.4.

32. *this is what's left to me*: To weep in recalling her name.

38. *from that veil*: Her soul released from the body.

40. *reclothed with it*: When her body is restored on the universal day of judgment, her beauty will become infinite.

48. *this is one column*: The memory of her living form.

53. *while she was flowering*: In his earthly paradise.

55. *close to truth*: To God in Heaven.

56. *Ladies*: Those who have studied her ways in the hopes of learning her angelic style. Cf. poem 261.

59. *let pity vanquish you*: Through his song as catharsis, allowing them to be overwhelmed by emotion.

61. *here at war*: His customary war against himself.

65. *cut the knot*: Giving himself up to death. Critics argue over whether he contemplated suicide, as they have about Dante. Dying from the inside—the imagination dying—seems a worse threat to the poet.

66. *He speaks to me within*: His own love reasons with him now—the *amoroso pensiero* that does not die.

67. *Control the pain*: This line received several reworkings by Petrarch, as if to illustrate the need to restore his unique balanced style to his verse. Cf. 264.76–79.

68. *excessive passion*: Debilitating grief over his personal loss. Plotinus warned against such excess in the *Enneads*.

70. *to others*: The blind world.

71. *her fair remains*: The veil from which she freed herself and on which she gazed lovingly in life.

72. *sighs only for you*: Finds in him her unique envoy.

76. *brighten your voice*: Polish his style, making it more clear and candid in order to praise her shining name.

78–82. *Flee the clear weather*. . .: Love has advised him to brighten his voice, yet instead, in this congedo he sends forth a message that conceals longing behind a black veil. Before Petrarch made this final version he composed two others of striking diversity, the first a poignant appeal for sympathy to the Florentine poet Sennuccio del Bene, and the other an attack on the pitilessness of the "torbido rio," the "ramo senz' ombra." The version he chose preserves an authorial detachment, as if he watches himself go forth as part of a simple cortege.

269 SONNET

In July of 1348 Cardinal Giovanni Colonna died of the plague, only a few months after Laura. Petrarch's double loss is noted here. Positioning this single sonnet between two canzoni deepens its significance, as poem 238, also a sonnet, was elevated in its position between two sestinas. As far back as poem 40 he had linked the generosity of his cultured patrons with his commitment to express his love for Laura, doubling his fabric, so to speak, with the Colonnas' understanding support. Now both his mind and spirit are bereft.

1. *Broken*: Both this pillar of the Church and the laurel tree have fallen. Cf. 266.12–14.

2. *provided shade*: The opportunity to retreat from the world to study and write.

4. *from Boreas . . . to Moorish Sea*: From north to south and east to west, referring to winds as well as seas.

5. *my double treasure*: Laura and the cardinal.

6. *with joy . . . with pride*: Each doubling in lines 6–8 relates either to Laura or the cardinal.

8. *oriental gem*: Frequently evoked to compare with Laura's beauty.

gold's own power: Cf. Cicero, *Tusculum* V, 32: "In pompa cum magna vis auri argentique ferretur."

9. *wish of destiny*: A tone of resignation.

11. *my head bent low*: How can he look to Heaven in the face of such calamity?

13. *just one morning*: Both Laura and Colonna died in their prime.

270 CANZONE

One paradox after another is revealed in this impassioned evocation of Laura now that she is most grievously dead, not the least of which is that it follows poem 268, where thought and emotion had been brought under such careful control. Another colloquy with Love, this canzone does not ask advice but sets out its own terms, buoyed by joy in the memory of his lady.

1. *ancient yoke*: Cf. 51.12, 62.10, 79.6, 89.10, 129.54, 197.3, and 209.7. Earthly love still tempts him.

3. *astonishing and new*: A proof of love never experienced by the world before.

4. *subdue me*: Make him a slave again.

5. *Find my beloved treasure*: Laura's entombed body. The imagery of the canzone draws on Ovid's accounts of Meleager, Atalanta, and Adonis in *Metamorphoses* VIII and X.

8. *make its home*: Now with Laura in Heaven.

11. *as the Abyss*: The Underworld, here one and the same with the world.

14. *take back from Death*: As if Laura were Proserpina, seized by Pluto. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* V.

15. *your colors raise again*: The amorous rosiness, the gold, and the white.

17. *endearing flame*: The loving glance that originally lit his fire.

20. *doe or stag*: Cf. Ps. 41:1, "Quenadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te Deus."

23. *and more to come*: Knowing that desire grows back even when it is killed. Cf. 264.62.

24. *since well I know myself*: Cf. 264.91–92: "I know myself, and I am not deceived / by a mistaken truth."

30. *you have no power outside your own kingdom*: Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* IX: "Cavalcando l' altrier per un cammino."

36. *dark and heavy mist*: Wintry, in contrast with the aura. Castelvetro interpreted the mist as "d'ogni concupiscevole e villano appetito."

38. *cannot reach*: Because he can no longer glory in the living Laura.

40. *soul is stronger in its rights*: Because it is immortal, having a say more pertinent than that of the body.

41. *their proper object*: Restore the soul of Laura to her body.

42. *without which thing*: Without the joy her living form gives him, he lives in torment.

44. *you exert your force*: Love raises his hopes.

47. *sunlight on ice*: Melting his defenses with the warmth of her glance.

48. *passageway*: The eyes of Laura, where Love had posted himself at the beginning.

51. *let me hear*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 468.

55. *hooks . . . bait*: "The hooks are her soft words, the bait her sweet acts and movements" (Vellutello). In the fifteenth century, Ficino identified *esca* (bait) as analogy, an attraction for like things.

57. *in her hair blond and curly*: Cf. poems 90, 160, 197, and 227.

62. *neglected artfully and thick*: Hair uncared for, as Daphne's was in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 98–99.

64. *sweetly cruel*: At once innocent and severe.

65. *myrtle, laurel*: Spirit is opposed to substance in this comparison. Myrtle was sacred to Mercury and laurel to Apollo; they were symbolic of the gods' action but could not be a direct medium for it.

66. *kept green inside of me*: It was the memory and awareness of both innocence and sensuality that spurred him to seek her through all the seasons.

69. *so much bold pride*: Death usurped Love's power by taking Laura.

70. *from which I feared escape*: Cf. 264.84–90. To be cut off from her would be death-dealing to his poetry.

72. *a second knot to tie*: Another love to take her place.

77. *invisible fires*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 2: "Volnus alit Venis, et coeco carpitur igni."

80. *pensiveness and silence*: Moderating the words from which he learned "what love was all about" (line 53).

82. *words once understood*: After reappraisal.

84–88. *the look of angels . . .*: He transforms Laura from the fiery young maiden to a mature woman most noble in her bearing.

84. *humble and submissive*: Moderating from the "artfully neglected" appearance of the young girl in line 62.

88. *which of the two*: Her youthful beauty or her attitude of majesty.

90. *I am safe*: Love cannot reproduce her.

91. *your domain*: That of Venus.

92. *one way or another*: With more than one object of affection.

94. *the heavens ordained no more*: He was destined for one love only.

95. *freedom's not my joy*: His security and freedom were gained at the expense of joy.

96. *Ah, noble pilgrim*: Laura, who passed through so quickly.

105. *its power failed*: Like the symbols myrtle and laurel, the bow and arrow of Love have lost their meaning.

106–108. *Death has freed me . . .*: Rather than the customary *envoi*, these lines provide a period to his extended sentence.

Poems 269 - 270

271 SONNET

Poem 270 could give the impression that the poet was tempted to love again, and this sonnet seems to confirm it, for once more Death is said to have liberated him from Love's snare, taking away a potential love object. Numbered among the anniversary poems, it begins a series of fifty-two sonnets, the second longest series in the collection.

1. *burning knot*: That point of concentration which was her divine presence in life.

2. *twenty-one entire years*: From the first encounter in 1327 to her death in 1348.

4. *now I know*: Cf. 262.9–11.

5. *let go of me*: Like the bird-hunter releasing a poor catch.

7. *new tinder*: A new enthusiasm.

9. *long trial*: Those twenty-one "entire years."

11. *less green*: His being "unripe" in the beginning slowed the pace of his burning and created a flame full of smoke and hissing. Now that he has aged, he will burn with a brighter, swifter fire.

12. *another time*: Cf. 257.4 and note. Because he suggests that he was tempted to love another woman, these lines are provocative. The matter is moot, however, because Laura's death (and Colonna's) delivered him from a second and all possible succeeding loves.

272 SONNET

The gap between life and death narrows as Death the runner gains on him from behind.

1–2. *Life runs away . . .*: Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* III, 66; and Ovid, *Ars amatoria* I, 8.

3–4. *present things . . . past / . . . future*: His time in history is marked by confusion and discord, raging on without hope into the future.

5. *anticipation, memory*: His old preoccupations, but in a new equation lacking hope.

6. *on either side*: Fill it on the left and on the right with equally depressing thoughts. Cf. 241.8.

8. *be free of all such thoughts*: Be dead to them.

11. *turbulent winds*: Of misfortune.

12. *storm in port*: Unhappy last days. Cf. Dante, *Convivio* IV, 28.

13. *my helmsman*: The guiding force of wisdom.
my masts and lines: His mainstay, his line with Heaven, his Laura.

14. *fair stars*: Her eyes.

273 SONNET

A more pragmatic voice responds to the despairing words of the last sonnet.

1. *What's going on*: Cf. 150.1.
What thoughts are these: The melancholy thoughts of poem 272.

2. *to times*: When he had felt some little sweetness, a bit of pleasure.
3. *Unhappy soul*: Reason speaks to his desiring soul.
3–4. *heaping / more wood upon the fire*: By returning again and again to the subject of love. Cf. 271.9–11.
6. *colored one by one*: As if he were a painter with words.
8. *too late*: Laura has returned to Heaven, and the golden season has passed.
9. *tortures us to death*: Causing him to die a thousand times a day.
10. *vague, deceptive thought*: Earthly and therefore illusory.
11. *pursue what's fixed*: Eternal.
13. *for all too badly*: With little understanding.

274 SONNET

Laid low by Love, Fortune, and Death, he finds enemies even in his innermost thoughts. Castelvetro noted that in this sonnet Petrarch is like a city besieged by enemies outside, disrupted by its citizens inside, and betrayed by one, his own heart.

1. *cruel thoughts of mine*: Those expressed in the preceding sonnet. Cf. Job 6:25, "Quare detraxistis sermonibus veritatis."
3. *at my very gates*: Through his eyes and ears, where he would most defend himself.
6. *Disloyal only to me*: A traitor who opens the gates to the enemy.
by giving shelter: Harboring conflicting thoughts.
7. *to cruel spies*: The three enemies of lines 9–11.
8. *so quick and ready*: To entice him into error.
9–11. *In you . . .*: The self-defeating desires his heart has played host to after letting them through the gates of his senses.
9. *display his secret charms*: His hidden agenda of betrayal.
10. *every pomp*: All her power to woo him back into worldly pursuits by revealing the splendor of her forces.
11. *that blow*: Laura's death.
12. *break up*: Like a defensive system on the verge of rout.
14. *I blame my every ill*: He answers the question of line 5: no, his once resolute heart has faltered.

275 SONNET

Not only do his thoughts war against him and his heart betray him, but his eyes, ears, and feet give him no peace.

3. *and there it waits*: Repetition of the words "there" (*ivi*) and "where" (*ove*) in the quatrains is insistent.
4. *because of our delay*: The tardiness of one who has not been chosen to go ahead.
6. *those who understand them better*: Those more worthy of her.
7. *My feet*: Mortal, unworthy feet.

9. *wage war against me*: That same war of thoughts carried out in poems 272–274 when Love tempted him once again.

10. *I'm not the reason*: Cf. 274.13–14.

12–13. *Who binds / and frees*: God united her soul with her body and then freed it in death. Cf. 271.1–4 and 12–14.

opens . . . closes: Opened his heart to love and then closed it with her death.

276 Sonnet

Although inner voices have told him he should accept the will of God and cease to inveigh against the injustice of Laura's death, the question remains, how is he to find his way without the light of her presence?

1. *serene, angelic sight of her*: Like Dante's Beatrice, she appeared as mortal proof of Heaven.

2. *quick departure*: Laura came into the world too late and left it too soon.

3. *shade of horror*: Of his own life and death in a dark age.

5. *just grief*: Cf. 217.1 This time surely he can be excused for weeping.

9. *This one cure*: The cause of grief and the cure for grief are the same thing—the face of Laura alive.

11. *fortunate earth*: That contains her grave.

13. *sweet and amorous and mild*: Laura as he would like to remember her.

14. *light of my eyes*: Cf. Ps. 37:10, "Lumen oculorum meorum et ipsum non est mecum" (Vellutello).

277 Sonnet

In a sonnet whose style illustrates his bewilderment, he cannot find his bearings or fix on a steady course without the star that once guided him.

1. *some new advice*: Love's last advice to him in 268.67 ff. was to control his grief and seek a way to praise Laura even in death.

3. *fear and grief*: Fear of the future, grief for the past and present (Chiari).

7. *stormy seas*: *Mar che frange*, literally, "sea that breaks." Cf. 148.3–4.

8. *true guide*: Such as the stars by which a helmsman charts his course.

10. *no, she's in Heaven*: He corrects himself twice, here and in line 12.

12. *not through my eyes*: Not by sight but by memory.

13. *forbids them*: His mortality obscures his vision. Cf. 276.3.

14. *turns my hair to grey*: Cf. 122.5 and 195.1.

278 Sonnet

Laura died three years ago and with her departed whatever was vital to him in this world. The sonnet dates itself 6 April 1351.

1. *full bloom*: Cf. 268.39: "which shadowed here the flower of her years."

5. *living, lovely, naked*: The soul free of the body, rising to eternal blessedness.

6. *drains my strength*: Keeps him laboring in her service by drawing his thoughts upward.

11. *trouble*: *Affanno*, a word often used to describe his poetic labors.

13. *much heavier to carry*: A double burden because he is drained of strength.

14. *three years ago*: At the time of writing this in 1351, Petrarch was in Padua, where he met with Boccaccio, who brought letters from the Commune of Florence recalling him from exile and restoring his patrimony. Petrarch was also invited to return to Florence to lecture, but he declined.

279 SONNET

In the summer of 1351 Petrarch returned to Vaucluse and, comforted by the beauty of his surroundings, seemed to hear the voice of Laura telling him not to grieve. An earlier sonnet written from Vaucluse, poem 260, also used the rare rhyme scheme *abab, baba* in the quatrains, suggesting mirroring of purpose.

1. *birds complaining*: At widely separated times in the *Canzoniere*, Petrarch evokes the sound of birds. Cf. 10.9, 219, 311, and 353.

3. *faint murmuring*: Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* I, 109: "Ecce supercilio clivosi tramitis undam elicit: illa cadens raucum per levia murmur saxa ciet" (Tassoni).

transparent waves: Of the Sorgue, Vaucluse's crystalline-clear spring waters.

7. *see and hear and feel*: The memory of Laura's presence in this place so like Eden.

7. *still alive*: To his senses.

9. *waste away before your time*: Prematurely aging in his preoccupation with her death. Cf. 278.6.

13. *into internal light*: She opened the eyes of her intellect to a vision of God (Zingarelli). Some editors altered this phrase in later editions to "eternal light," but Petrarch used it consistently through the various collections of his poems. Both Sapegno and Bosco discuss this apparent departure from doctrine.

280 SONNET

He heeds the words of the pitying voice in poem 279, but perhaps not in the way they were intended.

1–2. *I've never . . .*: These lines in the Italian are garbled. Muratori thought Petrarch left "in the pen" some word necessary for understanding. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XIII, 25–27 for similarity of style.

3. *so much freedom*: To experiment in his verse free of distraction and to gain objectivity, as he says in the next sonnet.

4. *cries of love*: *Stridi* are shrill cries, and with *soavi nidi* in line 8, they carry a hint of the lustful.

6. *hidden, trusty places*: "Secret and closed" noted Gesualdo in 1540, alluding to the name Vaucluse but also to the hermetic style of his verses.

7. *Love . . . in Cyprus*: Mythical home of Venus and her son Cupid.

8. *a sweeter nest*: Not even, for example, that which Venus shared with Adonis.

9. *the breeze*: Not *l'aura* but *l'òra*. Cf. 131.10 and 127.80.

14. *beg me . . . sweet hooks*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XIV, 145. It is a curious fact that Laura does not actually say this in poem 279, nor elsewhere in the *Canzoniere*.

281 Sonnet

Solitude and contemplation deep in the recesses of Vaucluse help to console him.

1. *my sweet nest*: Literally, shelter (*ricetto*).

4. *the air around me*: *L'aere*, a neutral, indifferent air. Cf. 280.9–11.

6. *gloomy, shadowy places*: Cf. the valley of 280.5–6.

7. *exalted joy*: The eyes of Laura.

9. *nymph or other goddess*: Cf. 129.40 ff.

10. *clearest depths of Sorgue*: The source of spring waters in Vaucluse.

11. *take her place*: Assume a reigning position.

13. *walking on flowers*: *Su per l'erba*, over these flowers yet just pressing upon them. Cf. Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, line 1028: "The grass stoops not, she treads on it so light."

like a living lady: Shadowed forth from his thoughts.

14. *sorrow for my state*: Her aspect changed now to mirror his pain.

282 Sonnet

Although he bathes the earth with his tears by day, at night he sees her eyes once more and recognizes her from all the familiar signs of her coming.

1. *Soul full of bliss*: He responds to the consoling voice he heard in the night in poem 279, speaking to him from Heaven. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XI, 615.

5. *I thank you for granting*: As if for a special grace.

9. *There where*: In Vaucluse. Cf. poems 279–281.

11. *no, not in tears for you*: He again corrects himself. Cf. 277.10 and 12.

13. *that when you come*: In dream or vision.

know it's you: This line and the next echo Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XI, the tale of Alcyone and Ceÿx. Cf. line 687.

14. *from how you walk*: He can visualize her soul only in his dreams, as Alcyone found in Ovid's story. Cf. *Metamorphoses* XI, 635–36: "Best of them all at imitating humans, / Their garb, their gait, their speech, rhythm and gesture."

283 Sonnet

As if sharing in Laura's death of the senses, he imagines himself blind and deaf to beauty.

1. *discolored*: Drained it of life's contrasting colors. The first quatrain speaks of information received by the eyes, the second of that received by the ears.

3. *ardent virtues*: Courage and compassion.

6. *gentle sounds of speech*: Cf. 273.5 and 275.5. The world no longer hears her words, more suited now for Heaven.

9. *She does, indeed, return*: Cf. 282.1: "Soul full of bliss who often comes to me" either in dream or in vision.

11. *no other help*: Only by grace of her returning to his mind is he comforted.

12. *speaks . . . shines*: To the inner ear and eye.

if I / could tell you: If he were possessed of the power to describe spirit.

13–14. *I could set aflame*: Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, 67–75.

14. *tigers, bears*: Words used to describe Laura's own heart in 152.1.

284 SONNET

The grace extended to him by the soul of Laura appearing in his dream is all too brief.

2. *so long dead*: *Così morta*—emphatically dead.

3. *medicine falls short*: Comfort fades quickly.

5. *keeps me on this cross*: The martyrdom of his sexuality.

6. *trembles*: With fear for his audacity (Zingarelli).

6–7. *the threshold of the soul*: His eyes (Zingarelli); his imagination or mind (Daniello, Carducci, et al.). Elsewhere in 274.3, "porte" applied to his senses.

8. *so sweet . . . so soft*: So intense a sensation.

9. *her home*: His heart, which she governs.

12. *cannot bear so great a light*: Is humbled.

13. *blessèd be the hours*: Cf. poems 13 and 61. This reference is to their first encounter, providing a link to line 1.

14. *your eyes opened the way*: Communicated their message of love to his soul.

285 SONNET

More and more often Laura returns in his thoughts to counsel him, as would a mother, wife, or lover.

1–9. *Never did . . .*: Critics have noted the way Petrarch begins this sonnet as if it were a primal event.

3. *such consideration*: With care that she not frighten or excite him too much, that she say the right thing with tact and diplomacy.

4. *doubtful time*: When he fears for his soul.

5. *grave exile*: From Heaven.

6. *eternal home*: Cf. poem 281, where the rhyme words *ricetto, sospetto*, and *deletto* appear in lines 1, 5, and 7.

12. *explaining things*: Consoling and reasoning with him as a loving woman would, balancing the good against the bad.

14. *a truce*: From the struggle that weighs down his soul. Carducci pointed to the word *tregua* as the one factor preventing this sonnet from reaching sublimity.

286 SONNET

To be able to portray the soul of Laura in the act of coming to him, sweetly advising him of the right path, would cause a stone to weep.

1. *aura's sighs*: The breath of Laura speaking her words of comfort.
2–3. *was mine, / my lady*: His sovereign.
4. *she lives*: Through the poet.
5. *could I portray them*: If it were possible to embody her sighs in words sufficiently meaningful.
warm desires: In the reader.
6. *so anxious*: *Gelosa*, concerned for his welfare.
8. *turn back, go the wrong way*: Fatal errors of love poets.
10. *pure allurements*: Cf. her "pure fire" in poem 285.
11. *beseechingly and low*: So as not to compete or arouse disdain; tactful. The persona of poem 285 colors this language.
12. *hold myself to her*: Go in the direction she advises, governing himself.
bend to her rule: Her superior position in Heaven.
13. *her words*: Cf. 285.12; and Dante, *Paradiso* IV, 119–22.
14. *make a stone shed tears*: Affect the heart of the most well-defended listener.

287 SONNET

A farewell sonnet addressed to his friend and fellow love poet Sennuccio del Bene, who died in November 1349, according to a note Petrarch made in Vat. Lat. 3196 beside poem 268, a canzone.

1. *O my Sennuccio*: Cf. poems 108, 112, 113, and 144.
3. *which enclosed you dead*: Petrarch is recalling Cicero, *Somnium Scipionis* VI, 7: "Immo vero, inquit, il vivunt, qui ex corporum vinculis tamquam e carcere evolaverunt: vestra vero quae dicitur vita, mors est." Throughout the Middle Ages the belief was common that what appeared to be death was instead a return to the true life.
5. *Now you can see*: Sennuccio has a better view of the earth and the stars from his new position in Heaven.
9. *But do please*: Intercede for him, as his best-known connection.
souls in the third sphere: That of Venus, sphere of love poets. In Dante's *Paradiso*, Beatrice explains how souls seek a haven suited to their powers, at a relative distance from God but one with Him.
10. *messer Cino*: Cino da Pistoia, poet and teacher of law (see poem 92). The term *messer* suggests that Cino the love poet, as Petrarch's immediate predecessor, was his master. Cf. 70.31–40.

Dante: Although Dante himself gravitated toward the sphere of Mercury, home of the worldly ambitious (*Paradiso* VI, 112–14), Petrarch places him here. It has often been noted that Petrarch slights Dante; but including him in the ranks of teachers and close friends seems more to honor than to disparage him.

Guittone: Guittone d'Arezzo, the oldest love poet listed (d. 1294); once praised by Guinizelli as "Charo padre meo," later criticized by him as overrated, a judgment repeated by Dante in *Purgatorio* XXVI, 124–26. According to Carducci, Guittone was the first to collect a book of love songs.

11. *Franceschino*: Franceschino degli Albizzi, Petrarch's valued friend and relative in Avignon, who died young of the plague in 1348.

all that company: An expression echoing Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVI, 34, when the pilgrim meets Guinizelli, Dante's own immediate predecessor and teacher, on the terrace of the lustful. Cf. also *Inferno* V, 41 and 85.

12. *And to my lady*: Laura also having risen to the third sphere. Boccaccio, in a sonnet lamenting the death of Petrarch, placed him there with "Lauretta," Boccaccio's Fiammetta, Sennuccio, Cino, and Dante.

13. *how wild I am*: *Una fera*, grief-stricken, but also, in the feminine, reflecting a quality of Laura, who has been described frequently as a wild beast. This description tends to draw all the above-mentioned poets into Petrarch's demented sphere, as Dante did in *Purgatorio* XXVI, mentioning black ants, cranes, and fish as analogies for the lustful.

288 SONNET

Alone, he feels connected with the harsh earth through his pain, and with the words that generations of poets have used to describe her dying.

2. *rugged hills*: In Vaucluse.

2–3. *sweet plain / where she was born*: According to early commentators, Laura's village lies in this plain between Vaucluse and Avignon.

3–4. *with my heart in hand / . . . bore fruit*: She kept him in thrall all through his days, up to and including his poetry's mature flowering. Cf. *Vita nuova* III, "Vide cor tuum."

5. *gone to Heaven*: Left him without an object of desire.

9. *no stick*: *Sterpo*, from the Latin *stirpis*, meaning new generation from an old trunk. His roots are dead.

10. *upon these shores*: *Piagge*, that is, verging on the abyss.

12. *water trickles from these springs*: Springs once "arising from the clearest depths of Sorgue" (281.10). Cf. also 279.3.

289 SONNET

It was all for his good that she set up so many obstacles to his impetuous desire; this he can see now with his new objectivity.

1. *beauty beyond all beauty*: In the words *oltra le belle bella*, Petrarch echoes Dante in the *Paradiso*, intensifying a proposition to the third power.

2. *kindest friend*: For the virtue invested in her (Castelvetro).

4. *back to her star*: To the sphere of Venus.

7. *tempered*: Exposing them alternately to heat and cold, strengthening them. Cf. poems 285 and 286.

8. *bitter, sweet*: *Fella*, bitter, is a one-time-only word meaning angry, even choleric, alternating with loving.

9. *holy counsel*: From Heaven.

10. *lovely face and gentle anger*: Corresponding to "bittersweet" but closer and less fearsome.

13. *with the tongue*: Her words, sweet or contentious.
with a glance: Her expression, loving or angry.

14. *her glory . . . my well-being*: These are interchangeable, according to the implicit correspondences in lines 9–13. His glory might lead to her greater well-being.

290 SONNET

This new change in him reveals his past ambivalence.

2. *what displeased me most*: Her angry expression.

4. *fight a short war*: A brief day or night of conflict between unbridled passion and sweet reason.

5. *Oh hope, oh wishes*: Words elongated and resonant in the Italian.

6. *for those in love*: Whose joy and pain have so many modes of expression.

7. *How much worse*: How many more treacherous hopes and wishes might he have expressed in his verse if she had given in to his desire?

9. *my own deafened mind*: Oblivious to the sound of her words during his times of darkness.

11. *where Death is found*: A gloss on the Ulysses legend. Lack of understanding permitted him to skirt close to death without being himself in danger.

12. *better shore*: Toward understanding, but belatedly.

13. *flattering a will*: Cf. the "pure allurements" of 286.10. She uses the sorceress's methods, but to a good end.

14. *wicked, aflame*: Opposed to the "lofty flame" (poem 289), whose flight he now would follow.
checked it: The living Laura lured and contained him, tempering his rampant will.

291 SONNET

His world has stopped, and he finds himself on the underside deep in shadow, envying Tithonus his Aurora.

1. *coming down the sky Aurora*: The dawn descending now rather than rising. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIII, the late myth of Aurora and Memnon, after Aurora is brought to her knees at the death of her son. Cf. also Dante, *Purgatorio* X, 1–3.

2. *roses . . . gold*: Aurora resembles Laura's loving aspect, radiating now from Venus. In a sonnet to Sennuccio del Bene excluded from the manuscript, Petrarch spoke of loving this "beautiful Aurora" as if she were a new inspiration.

4. *Laura is there*: A play on the word *l'aurora*. Cf. 219.5–8 and notes.

5. *you know when it's time*: At night when Aurora rejoins Tithonus.

7. *with my sweet laurel*: She who flourished in the day and now rests at night, unlike Tithonus.

9. *aren't so difficult to take*: Do not last an eternity.

11. *despise your head of white*: Reject you for your reputed loss of ardor.

12. *she darkens*: "Discoloring," as if the sun had withdrawn.

14. *only her name*: Like a puzzle, this sonnet hides the treasure of her name among its many images.

292 SONNET

Laura is dead but he lives on, like a verse line he cannot finish.

4. *made me different*: Set him apart, somewhere between Laura and the rest of the world.

6. *lightning flash*: Cf. 181.10.

9. *And I still live*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* X, 855: "Nunc vivo, neque adhuc homines lucemque relinquo" (Mezentius after the death of his son).

13. *dry is the vein*: Unnourished by her living presence. Cf. 230.9 and 288.9–14.

14. *my lyre . . . playing tears*: *La cetera mia*, his song an echoing refrain of grief. Cf. Job 30:31, "Versa est in luctum cithara mea."

293 SONNET

This sonnet, cited as evidence that Petrarch disparaged his love poems, continues the theme of redundancy and irrelevancy taken up in poems 290–292.

2. *so dear*: So valued, that is, profitable. Cf. 360.81.

6. *summit of my thoughts*: Laura ruled his imagination.

7. *no longer sweet*: Polished.

8. *rough and dark*: His true feelings now.

10. *somehow*: Spontaneously, because his love was fresh and fervent.

11. *not to win myself some fame*: Not to please with their sweetness.

12. *not honor*: He did not think of his love songs as earning him a place in Heaven.

13. *I would gladly please*: Resume the writing of polished love songs, if he could.

14. *silent*: With nothing more that's pleasing to say.

294 SONNET

This and the next two sonnets are similarly constructed, taking the form of a review of his work.

1. *would fill my heart*: In his young life she and his heart were one.

2. *a great lady in a poor and humble home*: Cf. poem 4.

4. *but dead, and she a goddess*: Now the two are radically split (the word *diva* making her more divided from him than ever).

7. *out of pity*: Cf. 286.14.

8. *no one can explain or write*: Cf. 283.12 and 286.5.

9. *they lament within*: Love and his soul silenced by her death and the passing of time.

12–14. *In truth . . .*: He declares three harsh truths in this tercet, illustrating how "stripped bare" of hope he is.

nothing but dust and shadow: An expression found in the Psalms, Genesis, and Job. Cf. also Horace, *Odes* IV, 7, 16: "Pulvis et umbra sumus."

295 SONNET

He turns another side to the light, making Laura the object of his thoughts rather than the subject. The rhyme scheme *abab, baab* appears one other time, in poem 210.

2. *softly sweet converse*: Remembering the good that she inspired and his "bit of happiness."

their object: Separate from himself.

4. *perhaps*: He sought explanations for her disappearance, remaining, in the main, hopeful.

7. *sees and hears and feels*: As if she were still fully alive, existing in time.

9–11. *Oh gracious miracle*: Laura alive was proof to him of Providence.

12. *crown and palm*: The laurel crown is the symbol of poetic triumph, the palm, of victory over self. Cf. 359.49.

13. *famous in the world*: Because of her example.

14. *my own mad passion*: His *furor.* Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 101: "Ardet amans Dido, traxitque per ossa furorem."

296 SONNET

This sonnet, the third in this series, returns to the old theme of love's prison.

1. *I often would accuse*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXXI, 76, speaking of Nimrod: "His words accuse him."

4. *blow . . . enclosed*: The original wound dealt his heart by Love, hidden from the world.

6–8. *bright thread / . . . golden arrow*: An underlying conceit of this sonnet is its interconnection of root words, in *fuso, troncaste, attorcea, stame, laccio, morte.* Together they create a dense layering of metaphors, as if he were using all the arrows in his quiver at once.

6. *spindle*: Clotho spins the thread of life, Lachesis determines the length of it, and Atropos cuts it off.

6–7. *soft, bright thread / around my bonds*: Laura's insinuating beauty around the chains of his love.

7. *rare golden arrow*: Laura's glance that enamored him and set his unique love in motion.

8. *beyond all limits*: Referring to the connection between love and death, in which the poet finds metaphoric freedom.

12. *choosing rather to moan*: Literally, "to draw moans" from himself and perhaps from others.

14. *such a knot*: All the curbs he must put on himself in order to serve her.

297 Sonnet

Although the lovely form of Laura is "scattered and disjoined" from her blessed soul by death, he follows the advice of Love in poem 268 and consecrates her name.

1. *Two formidable rivals*: Cf. Ovid, *Heroides* XVI, 288; and Juvenal, *Satires* X, 297.

2. *in such concordance*: Reconciled. Cf. 112.7.

3. *conflict in her holy soul*: Of Beauty against Chastity (*onestà*). The joining of the words *anima santa* has not occurred before.

5. *scattered and disjoined*: Cf. poems 261 and 262, where he combined these qualities first in Laura and then in Lucretia.

6. *one is in Heaven*: Chastity.

7. *one under ground*: Beauty, her body *sotterra.*

8. *darts of love*: Reproving glances. Cf. 229.8 for another use of *punta.*

10. *came from a high place*: From high intellect (Leopardi).

11. *it still shows signs*: She still excites his desire.

298 Sonnet

To demonstrate what happens when mind is sundered from body, he finds only harsh disparities as far back as the first day.

2. *scattered all my thoughts*: In verses sent out to the world one by one.

3. *in which I, freezing, burned*: The line intentionally weakens the impact of his well-known image, the icy fire, by being once-removed from feeling in its syntax ("e spento 'l foce ove agghiacciando io arsi").

4. *ended my repose*: The conflicts of youth were heaven compared to experiences he has now.

so full of woes: For a more felicitous use of this antithesis, see 61.5.

5. *broken the faith of amorous deceptions*: Gone is the hope that his faith will ultimately be read in these love poems.

8. *painful gains*: Purgatorial.

9. *so very naked*: Without the beauty and wholeness of her body to give force to his words.

10. *that I envy*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* III, 48.

11. *fear and suffer*: That his life may end in this low state.

13. *O Day*: 6 April.

299 Sonnet

He concludes his retrospective with a lament rising out of his extreme misery, yet with some of the old music of desire.

1. *Where is*: The word *ov'è* repeated four times at the beginning of each stanza corresponds to the repetition of *quanta* in the next sonnet. On the page together the two sonnets create an intriguing graphic effect.

the brow: The high source of his inspiration, like that of a god or goddess.

slightest movement: Change of expression.

3. *lovely lashes and two stars*: He moves downward over the contours of her face. Cf. poem 157.

5. *valor*: Of Laura's courageous words. Cf. poem 156.

9. *gracious image of a face*: Her human face beneath the divine brow.

12. *had me in her hand*: Held his heart. Cf. 23.72–74.

13–14. *How much . . . / . . . miss her now*: As if weighing his lack of worth, as well as the loss of her worth, in that hand.

300 Sonnet

Seeking signs of her in his visible surroundings and unyielding Heaven, he feels death beckoning to him through the memory of her eyes. This sonnet appears in Vat. Lat. 3196 with an inscription dated 9 April 1359 that refers to sending it, along with poem 305, to a friend the following 8 October.

1. *How much*: Cf. note to 299.1.

the greedy earth: That hides away her beauty.

3. *begrudging me the air*: Holding hostage the "aria" that once surrounded her person.

4. *settled for peace*: Cf. 285.14.

5. *Heaven, that holds and locks*: Cf. "begrudging me the air."

6. *greedily has gathered*: As if coveting her.

8. *rarely unlocks itself*: The souls admitted to Heaven are elected by birth, according to a late doctrine of St. Augustine. He fears he is not one of them.

13. *my very life*: The breath of Laura.
14. *lives in her lovely eyes*: He envies her the power to die.

301 SONNET

He turns once again to Vaucluse for serenity, beauty, and joy, although he cannot share in it.

1. *so filled*: Echoing back and forth unheeded.
4. *contained between green shores*: Free to feed within limits.
5. *warmed and cleared*: By his harsh passion.This sonnet has struck commentators as being more fit for the *commedia dell'arte* because of its vulgarity (Carducci).
6. *sweet path*: To Avignon.
7. *hill . . . now displeases me*: Reversing 290.1–2: "Now I'm charmed and pleased / by what displeased me most."
9. *usual traces*: The lovely shapes of Laura.
11. *home of endless grief*: Emptied of sweet desire.
12. *with these steps*: Following the sweet path backward.
14. *lovely spoils*: Her body.

302 SONNET

One of the most admired of Petrarch's sonnets, this "ecstatic vision" concludes with a question that draws the spirit downward to ground level.

3. *in the third sphere*: Among the elite of virtuous lovers. Cf. poem 287.
4. *more lovely, less proud*: Lovelier for being blessed, less proud because she bent to extend this courtesy to him.
6. *desire unerring*: When he so chooses to redirect his steps.
be with me again: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXXII, 101.
7. *fight so hard*: Made him war within himself with errant desire.
8. *before night came*: Before she declined into old age.
11. *my lovely veil*: Her body, awaiting the Resurrection. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XIV, 61 ff.
12. *drop my hand*: As if he were no longer worthy.
14. *never leaving Heaven*: Dying, his desire spent and his dream dissipated.

303 SONNET

Summoning thoughts of Vaucluse from a time when he ranked higher in Love's estimation, he blames destiny for the impoverished state he is in.

3. *settle all our old accounts*: Love owed him something for having sold him short.

5. *blooms . . .* Petrarch squeezes sixteen syllables into eleven beats here by ingenious use of elision, similar to this line by Arnaut Daniel: "Er vei vermeills, vertz, blaus, blancs, gruocs Vergiers, plaus, plais, tertres e vaus."

6. *valleys enclosed*: The topography of the reflecting mind. Cf. poem 129. It is interesting that all these components of his happiness are given in the plural, even "valleys enclosed."

10. *O nymphs*: Cf. 281.9. Tassoni (1609) imagined all these to be woodland deities, including dryads and satyrs, who once attended Laura.

you whose . . . grassy bed: The fish within the spring; the Naiads of paganism (Tassoni).

11. *liquid crystal*: Waters of the mountain spring.

13. *as Death, the cause of it*: Death the transvestite who changed his day to night.

14. *our destiny is with us*: Written into this place that surrounds him.

304 SONNET

This sonnet concluded the Chigi form of the *Canzoniere*, put together between 1359–1362. Boccaccio was said to have destroyed some of his lyrics after reading at least parts of this manuscript.

1–2. *by loving worms . . . devoured*: A colloquial expression for tormenting thoughts, as of one who thinks and rethinks without ever coming to a conclusion (Salvini).

3. *charming beast*: Laura, fierce and elusive. Cf. 126.27–29.

7. *not so strong*: Literally, scarce (*scarse*).

9. *That fire's dead*: His fervor died with Laura.

meager marble: Laura's grave or his enduring poetic output. Cf. Petrarch's *Epistles* I, 1, to Barbato da Sulmona: "Nunc breve marmor habet longos quibus arsimus ignes."

10. *had it gone on growing*: Had Laura lived.

11. *as is the case with others*: More fortunate lovers. The phrase was echoed by Boccaccio in the introduction to the *Decameron*, where he lists Dante, Cavalcanti, and Cino da Pistoia, but not Petrarch, as poets whose productivity lasted until the end of their lives.

12. *armed with the verse*: Cf. poems 292 and 293. If she had lived, those "daring" poems he now finds unstable and strange might have been the focal point of a great work, perhaps the epic Petrarch yearned to write.

14. *shattered stone*: Cf. poems 286 and 294. For the use of *petra*, see 50. 78, 51.7, and 135.16.

305 SONNET

He begs that she may look upon the good he has done in his solitary labors in Vaucluse but turn away from that which is unworthy in Avignon, where her body lies.

5. *false opinion*: That he loved her for the beauty of her body alone.

7. *severe and cruel*: Because she doubted his faith.

now all secure: From any further ambivalence.

8. *look upon me*: Turn her eyes toward this creature who can no longer do her harm.

9. *lofty rock*: *Gran sasso,* whose high vault overlooking Vaucluse contained the treasure of his high idea. Cf. poem 117.

11. *feeds upon*: Nourishes his verse.

12. *your house stands*: Her grave in Avignon.

13. *abandon, leave*: Disassociate herself for all time from the desecrated land.

14. *in your people*: In her countrymen. Those same sinful ways with which she identified him in her false opinion continue to be practiced by the people she left behind.

306 SONNET

He contemplates which road to take from his impoverished state, a "desert on a cliff."

1. *The sun*: Laura. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* I, 16.

3. *to the highest sun*: God.

4. *her own earthly jail*: He has hidden his sun and her body in the graveyard of his words. Cf. 279.13–14: "into internal light / my eyes were opened."

5. *wild beast of the woods*: *Animal silvestro,* Diana's sacred beast, unable to speak. Cf. 23.157–160 and poem 237.

8. *desert on a cliff*: Barren, where one can neither rise nor descend.

9. *all of those regions*: *Contrada,* a naked word to describe what were, as recently as poem 303, nests of love adorned with natural beauty.

11. *Love, come with me*: Be his only guide.

12. *holy footprints*: Vestiges of her life and works.

14. *far from the infernal lakes*: From the darkened wasteland in which he lives. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, 309.

307 SONNET

All his dreams of flying high in praise of her were a frail craft in comparison with the sublime weight of the real, living Laura.

1. *my wings were strong enough to soar*: His imagination, with her inspiration, could raise him and her to the greatest heights.

2. *by his who spreads them*: Love.

3. *lovely knot*: Her body and soul, tied in life to his mind and senses. Cf. 296.5–8.

4. *Death loosens me*: Absolves him.

6. *a small branch*: The analogy excludes the bird that attempts to take flight from that branch, suggesting that Petrarch had come to consider his love poems, at best, as points of departure for future poets.

bent by a heavy burden: The accumulated weight of her beauty. Note that in 81.1, the *fascio* is his bundle of sins.

7. *who flies too high*: Recalling the warning of Daedalus to Icarus not to fly too close to the sun.

8. *what Heaven denies*: Sufficient leverage.

10–11. *as high as Nature / flew*: To Heaven for her idea. Cf. 159.1.

11. *wove my sweet impediment*: The "lovely knot" of line 3.

13. *adorned her*: Weighted her down.

14. *my good luck*: To have been at the right place at the right time to see her.

308 SONNET

Following Love, he attempts to bring forth her beauties with the poor materials he has at hand.

1. *exchanged Arno for Sorgue*: Meeting with Boccaccio in Italy in 1351, Petrarch had refused his invitation to lecture in Florence and returned to retirement in Vaucluse that summer, when this sonnet is believed to have been written.

2. *servile riches*: Money and fame laboring for a lesser goal.
free poverty: To study and write (and to love) without gain.

6. *capture her high beauty*: To reincarnate her in words.

7. *those to come*: Posterity.

10. *stars that spreading*: Each beauty yielding love as a blessed soul in Heaven.

11. *just one or two*: The eyes of Laura.

12. *the part divine*: Her soul.

14. *my courage fails*: His fire is eclipsed by her glory.

309 SONNET

Love still urges him to bring beauty and virtue to life again for those who have not seen her truth.

1. *high, new miracle*: The soul of Laura.

2. *did not want to stay*: Left the world gladly.

4. *decorate the cloisters*: Divine Love adorns the heavenly nest with her beauty (Gesualdo).

5. *given freedom to my tongue*: When he first was moved by Love to praise her.

8. *for those who have not seen*: Posterity.

9. *not yet at its highest*: He has not yet even attempted the consummate subject matter. "Highest" (sommo) seems to be a non sequitur to "a thousand times in vain" in line 6, since it compares the sublime with repeated failure.

12. *think the silent truth*: That is beyond language to describe, although one can know it deep inside.

13. *surpassing every style*: Bringing an end to all trying.

14. *God blessed those eyes*: Not only luck (307.14) but Providence conspired to bring the goddess to life in his eyes.

310 SONNET

Some other bird will fill the air with song and seek the consummate love poem, now that his world has become a desert. This sonnet has been translated into both music and painting.

1. *Zephyr comes back*: The west wind, whose arrival brings a chill to the dimished spirit.

2. *his sweet family*: In a lovely train as if springing from Zephyr's loins (Leopardi). Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* II, 330: "Parturit almus ager, Zephrique tepentibus auris Laxant arva sinus."

3. *Philomel . . . Procne*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VI, 424–674. In Ovid's version of the legend, Philomela was raped and her tongue cut out by Tereus, husband of Procne, her sister. In revenge Procne slaughtered her son, Itys, and with Philomela's help cooked and served him to his father for dinner. The sisters in turn were slaughtered by Tereus and turned into nightingale and swallow respectively, and Tereus into the hoopoe, bird of war.

4. *all in whiteness and vermilion*: The colors of innocence and blood as well as the flowers of May. Cf. 127.71–76 and poems 245 and 246; cf. also Virgil, *Eclogues* IX, 40.

6. *Jove takes joy*: This signifies a felicitous positioning of the planets Jupiter and Venus; or Jove may be happy at the sight of Proserpina in the meadows before her rape by Pluto.

7. *waters, earth, and air*: Cf. Virgil, *Eclogues* VII, 55: "Omnia nunc rident."

14. *deserts now*: Dead to the resurgence of beauty and spring.

311 SONNET

According to Carducci, this lament to the nightingale is second only to Virgil's in the way it reproduces that bird's music.

1. *That nightingale*: Cf. 10.10–12 and 310.3 ("crying Philomel").

2. *children*: In *Epistles* I, 8, Petrarch praised Philomela as queen of song for the common people, the first sufferers of loss.

4. *skillfully played*: As if repeating an ancient, well-learned music. Cf. Pliny, *Historia naturalis* X, 43: "In una perfecta musicae scientia modulatus editur sonus, et nunc continuo spiritu trahitur in longum, nunc variatur inflexu, nunc distringitur conciso, copulatur intorto, promittitur revocato, infuscator ex inopinato; interdum et secum ipse murmurat; plenus, gravis, acutus, creber, extensus, ubi visum est vibrans, summus, medius imus."

6. *reminding me of my harsh destiny*: To speak out about loss.

7. *I have no one to blame*: Cf. poem 10, where the memory of Christ's loss evoked the "amoroso pensiero."

9. *one who is sure*: One whose faith comes too easily to him, that is, one who has not learned from history. Cf. 119.50–53.

12. *fierce fate of mine*: To be witness to her lonely life and death.
14. *can please and also last*: For even goddesses die. Cf. 1.4.

312 Sonnet

As if to amplify the last line of poem 311, this sonnet is built entirely on negativities. A *plazer*, it follows the style of Cavalcanti.

1–9. *No lovely* . . .: Castelvetro noted that the first quatrain speaks of things seen and the second of things heard.

1. *stars that roam*: Traced by the yearning eyes of astrologers.
2. *well-oiled ships*: Ready for fortuitous voyages.
3. *knights in armor*: Free to roam at will.
4. *swift and frisky beasts*: Graceful objects of the chase, delight of hunters.
5. *long-awaited joy*: Of new beginnings.
6. *poems of love*: A flowering of verse that follows on good news.
8. *ladies*: The loveliest and most lofty subject matter of all.
10. *buried it*: When she died. Lines 9–11 are among the most alliterative in the *Canzoniere*.
12. *pain of living*: *Noia*, as in Provençal and Old Italian.
14. *I should have never seen*: The ultimate negativity, contradicting 309.14: "God blessed those eyes that saw her still alive!" To see her was to lose her.

313 Sonnet

Another lyrical enumeration of lost joys, this rises from the decrescendo of the last sonnet to the wish that he might join her in Heaven.

2. *refreshed within* . . . *flames*: A faint echo of the icy fire of times gone by, suggesting here a purgatorial fire.

6. *that going*: Playing on the word *passando*, so that he brings forth the living Laura as she passed, making her coming almost simultaneous with her leaving.

pierced my heart: When she exchanged glances with him that very first day.

8. *wrapped it in her lovely cloak*: The veil of her mortality. According to Zingarelli, Petrarch alludes to the Virgin Mary.

9. *She took it*: In part underground with her body, in part to Heaven with her soul. Petrarch pursues this puzzling line of thought in sonnets to follow.

10. *she triumphs*: Cf. 263.1
11. *unconquered chastity*: The sum of all her blessed qualities.
13. *by force*: By destiny.

314 Sonnet

So much importance did the last sight of Laura have for him that he reached the zenith of his life at that moment.

1. *Oh my mind that, foreseeing*: He refers back to the last poems of Part I, beginning at poem 242 where he began to worry about her dying. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* X, 843: "praesaga mali mens."

4. *coming troubles*: The unhappy truth about the future that his mind was able to foresee.

6. *strange pity . . . mixed with pain*: Cf. the "double pity" of 285.8.

7. *were you fully aware*: If his mind had listened to its own promptings. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* II, 54: "Si mens non laĕva fuisset."

9. *in that moment*: When he took leave from her.

10. *How much we burned*: His heart and soul together.

11. *never see again*: Cf. 250.14.

14. *my noblest part*: His love.

315 SONNET

That period just before she died, now that he recollects, was like a truce broken by the treacherous blow of death.

1–2. *green age . . .*: Note the use of *etade* (age), *securtade* (confidence), *onestade* (honesty), *Castitate* (chastity), leading up to *felice stato* (state of bliss) in line 12. They comprise a basis on which to "sit and talk" (l. 11).

3. *the fire in my heart*: His fighting spirit.

4. *the point where life declines*: The midpoint changes with hindsight; in 124.11 he had "already run half of [his] course" at a probable 35 years of age. Petrarch was 44 when Laura died.

5. *my dear enemy*: Laura.

7. *her fears*: That she could not trust him.
turn to joy: To arouse new hope in him with her candor. Cf. 243.12.

9. *reconciled*: When the enemy smiles and war is reduced to harmless games.

10. *with Chastity*: Her minister of defense.

11. *sit and talk*: Cf. 285.14: "and only while she speaks I've peace, a truce."

13. *rather the hope*: A correction, since he is still not sure.

316 SONNET

This poem remembers, like the preceding sonnet, a time just before she died when passions cooled.

1. *my peace or truce*: When Laura turned a more trusting eye on him. Cf. 285.14 and 315.6.

3. *those glad steps*: His steps toward reconciliation.

3. *turned back by the one*: Death. Cf. 315.12–14.

9. *She hadn't long to wait*: He was already shortening the distance between them.

10. *were changing me*: As his desire waned, his habits indeed changed. Cf. 122.5 and 195.1.

11. *about my troubles*: Falsely try to sway her with his eloquence.

12. *virtuous sighs*: Assuming a style more in keeping with his age and hair color.

13. *of my long labors*: All the good he has done.

14. *she sees . . . and grieves*: Able to "see both poles at the same time" from her home in heaven (287.5). The image of Laura in Heaven observing him in his travail recalls Beatrice and the Virgin grieving for Dante in *Inferno* II, 58–72.

317 SONNET

The last of four in a series, this poem describes how Love showed him the way to reach the fruit of wisdom before Death tore her away.

1. *a port of peacefulness*: He speaks of a time just before Laura died. Cf. poems 314–316.

2. *storming turbulence*: The years of his confused youth.

3. *chaste maturity*: Cf. 315.9–12.

4. *strips off vice*: Like animals that shed their old skin (Zingarelli).

5. *heart and . . . faithfulness now shone*: No longer obscured by mutual suspicion and angry feelings.

7–8. *spoil / the fruit*: Split hope from the branch before it had come to fruition.

10. *entrusted her chaste ears*: Cf. 315.9–11 and 316.9–11.

11. *all the ancient weight*: A wisdom of love crossing the ages.

13. *chosen words*: Cf. the pitying words in poem 285.

14. *our faces*: These events, their growing old together in peace, were anticipated in poem 12.

318 SONNET

Laura's physical death marks the beginning here, rather than their first romantic encounter. Notable in this sonnet are its assonance, ingenious rhymes (including *rime riche*), and classical and biblical allusions.

1. *At a tree's crash*: Cf. 269.1.

2. *by the wind or iron*: Symbolic of circumstance and war. Cf. Horace, *Odes* IV, 6, 9–10.

3. *scattering . . . noble spoil*: Laura's beloved mortal self.

4. *its wretched root*: Parched.

5. *I saw another Love chose*: The soul of Laura, or the memory of her name.

6. *Euterpe and Calliope*: Muses of lyric and epic song, according to Hesiod's *Theogony*.

as my subject: This new plant. Cf. Ezek. 15:1–8, where the vine is compared with the tree, historically Jerusalem.

7. *bound my heart*: The laurel sprouted anew out of the deepest roots of his living heart.

8. *as ivy winds*: Serpentine, rerooting itself on the ruins of fallen walls and cities.

11. *never stirred a leaf*: Never gained a response.

12. *risen*: For *translato*, cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XIV, 83.

14. *keeps calling out*: like the voice of the murdered Polydorus calling out to Aeneas from the Thracian shore. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* III, 40 ff.

319 SONNET

From the cataclysm described in poem 318 and its mythic reverberations, he turns again to his familiar lament.

1–2. *My days . . . / like shadows*: Cf. Ps. 101:12, "Dies mei sicut umbra declinaverunt."

3. *more than a wink*: Those times when she smiled on him were so rare. Cf. 73.75.
few were those calm hours: Of truce.

4. *I keep in my mind*: Use as a guide.

5. *O wretched world*: Miserly for the few joys it yields, arrogant for its brazenness.

7. *my heart was torn*: From worldly things by his love for Laura.

9. *her best form*: Laura's soul.

11. *makes me fall more in love*: Cf. 318.5.

14. *what it was like*: Before she became a skeleton, her flesh "already putrefied underground" (Albertini, 1835). There is a bit of play in lines 13–14 that contributes to the grisliness.

320 SONNET

That source of peace which he enjoyed so briefly has vanished from the hills of Vaucluse.

1. *aura of old times*: The Laura of his youth. There is an emphasis on the remote past in the verbs of this sonnet.

4. *forlorn and wet*: Softened, that is, weakened by tears.

6. *The grass is widowed*: Darkened with grief.

7. *the nest in which she lay*: The cold earth where, living, she once reclined. Cf. 126.1–6.

8. *I live . . . liked to die*: Petrarch, who had been accused of necromancy by one contemporary churchman, may be playing with his subject matter.

12. *cruel and stingy*: Love.

13. *see my fire*: Laura.

14. *scattered ashes*: His verse, now just the dead remains of his love.

321 SONNET

From the ashes of poem 320 the memory arises of his one true phoenix, a bitter loss to him now.

1. *that phoenix of mine*: Cf. poems 135.1–15, 185, 210. Laura was the hope of the age.

2. *gold and purple feathers*: Like the plumage of the phoenix that invites the sun's fire.

3. *under her wing*: She shielded him, that he might burn with her. Cf. Ps. 16:8, "Sub umbra alarum tuarum protege me."

4. *still elicits*: The verbs *elicere* and *colere* (adore) in line 11 appear just once in the *Canzoniere*. They perform double duty in their alternate senses of "extract spirally" and "filter" or "purge."

5. *O primal root*: His tree of life. Cf. 214.8 and 318.13.

6. *while I burned*: That face inflaming him in the same self-destructive way, perhaps, that the phoenix is set afire by the sun.

10. *return to that place grieving*: Where he first saw her.

11. *adore and honor for your sake*: Celebrate it in order to consecrate her name.

12. *the black of night*: Referring to line 1, where he can barely recognize his surroundings. Cf. Ps. 16:9.

322 SONNET

Giacomo Colonna wrote a sonnet in 1341, the year of his death, praising Petrarch on the occasion of the poet's coronation with the laurel. Twenty-five years later, on 5 December 1366, Petrarch transcribed this *risposta* along with Colonna's *proposta* into Vat. Lat. 3196 with the notation, "Responsio mea, sera valde" (My response, a late conclusion). In this same time period he added the Latin title of the *Canzoniere—Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (Fragments in the vernacular).

3. *Love appears to sparkle*: Colonna's opening quatrain "reduces" his own body, mind, and spirit into infinite sparks and atoms that speak in praise of the young poet. Petrarch makes use of both Colonna's rhymes and metaphors.

4. *hand of Kindness*: Referring to the bishop's magnanimity.
has composed: Put together again.

5. *Spirit unvanquished*: In Colonna's second quatrain he speaks of Hector and Achilles. Colonna himself had been proven a brave and invincible warrior for peace early in his life (Chiari).

6. *now distills such sweetness*: Purified of strife by the intellect.

7. *gave back my wandering poetry / the style*: Reminded him of his original purpose, from which he deviated after the death of Laura.

8. *before Death cut it off*: Colonna's words, evoked from the past, were finally understood by him just before Laura died.

9. *some other product of my tender leaves*: Other verse worthy of the eyes of Giacomo that might have fulfilled his youthful promise.

10–11. *envied / our union so*: That it cut their collaboration so short.

12. *Who hides*: Delays their reunion, but also prevents the fruition of his idea.

14. *In you, sweet sigh*: This sonnet of reply that finally acknowledges his moral debt to Colonna.

323 CANZONE

Six visions of Laura's death are dramatically rendered in this canzone, which has often been imitated. Its date of composition is unknown, but Petrarch transcribed it in 1368 with the note "Octobris. 13. veneris ante matutinum. ne labatur. contuli ad cedulam plusquam triennio hic inclusam. et eodem die inter primam facem et concumium transcripsi in alia papiro quibusdam etc." Wilkins dates it 1362–67 in Venice.

1. *while at my window*: As if gazing through a frame with the eyes of his mind.

3. *made me weary*: Seeing them whole and all in one place.

5. *with human face*: The beast is Laura in her mortal form.

6. *hounds, one black one white*: The legendary dogs of the hunter Time, the black being night, the white day (Gesualdo). Cf. Boccaccio, *Decameron* V, 8; and Dante, *Inferno* XIII, 109–29.

9. *in no time*: A suddenness that is repeated in some manner in each stanza.

forced her to the pass: To the verge of death. Cf. 100.9.

10. *trapped within the stone*: In a labyrinth (*sasso*) from which the only escape is death. The chase and the stone are purgatorial symbols.

12. *and I sighed from the sight*: His detachment, like that of the protagonist in Boccaccio's *Decameron* V, 8, and is germane to this vision. As the canzone progresses he enters the scene.

harsh fate: Cf. the metamorphosis of Actaeon, 23.156–160.

13. *a boat*: Laura's form as his art.

14–15. *silken . . . gold / . . . ebony*: "Oriental" beauties, wrought with Byzantine splendor.

16. *the sea was calm*: Peace had come just before she died. Cf. poems 314–317.

18. *precious cargo*: The word *merce* (cargo) has been used only once before, in 235.6.

19. *a sudden storm*: Although Petrarch does not give the cause of Laura's death, it has been assumed since the fifteenth century that he refers here to the plague, which struck Europe in 1348, moving from the east.

20. *air and waters*: A general cataclysm.

22. *what oppressing grief*: *Cordoglio*, pain felt in the heart.

23. *little space now hides*: The grave. Cf. 304.9: "covered by meager marble."

26. *young, slender laurel tree*: Nubile and ever green.

29. *different birds*: The great poets.

30. *cut me off*: The laurel shielded him. In this vision, the witness himself enters the scene.

32–35. *the sky . . .*: He compresses Laura's lifetime into the space of a moment.

33. *struck with lightning*: To which the laurel had previously been impervious.

36. *shade like this*: *Ombra*, her mortal self as it cast its impression on his soul.

37. *a sparkling fountain*: Laura's speech that was pure and free.

38. *sprang from a rock*: From its source in the deep earth, referring perhaps to an original sacred language of love. (Zingarelli identifies the fountain as virtue.)

39. *gentle murmuring*: That spoke words of silent truth to his heart.

40. *fair and shady*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 407 ff., the pool of Narcissus.

41. *no shepherds and no boors*: No rough sensibilities.

42. *muses and nymphs*: Providing the music for the lyric poet.

43. *I sat down there*: The witness enters the scene even more definitively.

44. *I took more sweetness*: First from the sound of birds and other joys (l. 29), then from these deep waters.

47. *fountain and place*: Obliterating all traces of that source.

48. *fills me with fear*: With dread for the future. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XIII, 45.

49. *A marvelous phoenix*: Cf. 135.1–15 and, most recently in the poems, 321.

50. *adorned in purple . . . gold*: The colors of her plumage.

51. *in the woods*: In the darkest part of the forest, deeper than the grove of line 25.

52. *At first I thought*: He could not believe what his eyes were seeing.

53–54. *torn-out laurel / . . . spring stolen away*: The destruction of the last two visions.

55. *All things rush*: Even the phoenix is subject to time.

56. *leaves strewn on the ground*: Torn from the branches of the shattered laurel.

57. *living waters dry*: The fountain swallowed up by the earth.

59. *and quickly vanished*: Leaving no heir, no phoenix reborn.

60. *set my heart aflame*: Awoke a new desire in him, moved by compassion.

63. *sets me aflame and shaking*: With love and fear simultaneously. Cf. 313.2.

64. *humble . . . haughty*: The incomparable Laura of old. Cf. 121.5–6.

65. *so very white*: So pure.

66. *so woven*: Cf. 127.44–45 and 49–51.

67. *the upper part*: Her face and eyes hidden.

69. *stung upon her heel*: Cf. the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X, 8; and Virgil, *Georgics* IV, 454.

small snake: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* VII, 84: Fortune's "sentence hidden like a snake in grass."

70. *as a cut flower withers*: Quickly, as in the other five manifestations of her death. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* II, 435 (Euryalus), and XI, 68 (the death of Pallas).

71. *left in joy*: Secure in her blessedness.

74. *given to my lord*: To the poet.

75. *sweet wish to know death*: To follow her.

324 BALLATA

The first ballata since poem 149 and the only one in Part II, this confirms that Laura still has dominion over his heart in spite of her sixfold death in poem 323. According to notations on Vat. Lat. 3196, the ballata was composed in 1348, corrected in 1356, and transcribed into Vat. Lat. 3195 in October of 1368 with further corrections. Chiari suggests Petrarch waited until 1368 to add it, deliberately holding it back for some reason.

1. *hope was blossoming*: His new hope. Cf. poems 314–317.

2. *guerdon*: Reward for his faithfulness, that is, the colors of his lady given to him when they sat together in truce just before she died. For an early use of *guidardon*, see 130.4.

3. *promised mercy*: "A port of peacefulness" (317.1).

4. *Ah Death . . . Life*: Merciless both. The rest of the ballata brings them into balance.

6. *kills my hopes*: Took her before he could make good on her promise.

10. *But still*: He suspends time.

11. *sits Madonna*: Cf. 126.40–52.

12. *she sees for herself*: So identified is she with his soul and body. Cf. Dante "Li occhi pietosi": "Ma quel ch'io sia, la mia donna sel vede / E io ne spero ancor da lei merzede."

325 CANZONE

Even in his young manhood Fortune had appeared before him in a vision and warned him of the sad turn his life would take. Now he would remember her wise advice. Much admired for its classical tone, this canzone does not break down into the usual conflicts but maintains a consistently high level of praise throughout. The imagery is that of St. Augustine.

1–8. *Silent I cannot be . . .*: An appeal to Love that he might speak out again with his old voice.

5. *if you do not teach me, Love*: Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXIV, 52–54.

6. *mortal words do justice*: Cf. poem 5.14. In recent poems he despaired of achieving his golden style again.

7–8. *concealed . . . / . . . in itself*: Cf. 182.7–8.

9. *Not long*: He begins a history.

lovely prison: Of her body.

11. *realized that she existed*: When he fell in love at age twenty-three, according to his own notation.

12. *so quickly I ran*: Covering the whole course of his youth in a moment.

13. *years and of that year*: His life's springtime and 6 April 1327.

16. *The walls were alabaster*: He begins to rebuild the temple of her body. The walls were the purest white marble, like her skin.

17. *sapphire the windows*: Eyes that seemed to mirror the color of the deep. Cf. 29.23, 72.50, and 151.7. Sapphire is identified with Jove in classical myth, Sophia in gnosticism, and with images of the Virgin Mary.

20–21. *burst forth all armed / with flames and arrows*: The effect of her glance.

24–25. *a lofty throne / of diamond squarely cut*: Her chastity, cruel in its effect on the lover. For the image, see St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* IV, 26.

27–28. *a column / crystalline*: Her brow, pure and candid, or possibly her intellect.

32. *green ensign of victory*: The laurel.

34. *Jove and Apollo*: Whose powers of sovereignty (Jove), wisdom (Apollo), physical strength (Polyphemus), and warlike fervor (Mars) all pale in comparison with Laura (see Chiari).

35. *tears . . . green*: Where new lyrical thoughts are forever springing up.

37. *let myself be taken*: He entered the labyrinth, a prisoner of love.

39–40. *departing / will see*: Turning back to look.

42. *on a balcony*: According to Dante, *Convivio* III, 8, the eyes and mouth are balconies of the soul residing in the beautiful woman.

43. *alone was perfect*: Laura.

49. *turning to marble*: Becoming cold, hard, and pure like that little bit of stone that eventually would mark his grave. Cf. 23.72–80, 104.8, 304.9.

50. *a lady*: Fortune, born with the world but ever young. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* VII, 88–90.

52. *so intent*: Cf. lines 44–45 and 323.31.

54. *My, take my advice*: Fortune speaks twice to catch his attention.

55. *for I have greater power than you think*: Cf. 23.83: "Perhaps I am not what you think I am."

56. *in an instant*: Demonstrating the nature of sudden good fortune, determined by pure chance.

59. *like an eagle on that sun*: Without blinking while looking on the noble Laura.

60. *pay attention*: As if his desirous eyes were wandering.

61–64. *The day that she was born . . .*: The best astrological conditions prevailed when Laura's soul came down, and comparable souls in heaven rejoiced. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXX, 109 ff.

65. *Both Venus and her father*: The planets Venus and Jupiter in conjunction. Cf. 310.6.

66. *were holding to . . . parts*: "High, selected places," corresponding to eyes that remain fixed on the balcony of the house of the body (ll. 42–45).

67–68. *cruel, impious lights / . . . dispersed*: The planets Mars and Saturn, their malign effects diluted but not absent.

73. *a cloud off in the distance*: Portending sadness. Cf. 323.67–68.

75. *if Pity does not change*: Only God can alter the outcome at the point of death.

78. *a wondrous thing*: Literally, "new" (*nova*).

79. *pearl enclosed in finest gold*: The infant Laura.

81. *First crawling*: The child discovering the world as if she were spring moving over the land.

84. *turn fresh and proud*: Stand up, taking on her beauty. Cf. Statius, *Thebais* V, 429: "tunc terra superbit Gressibus."

87–88. *words not fully formed / made by a tongue*: Still naive, yet possessed of native wisdom. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XXV, 132–33 (Carducci).

92. *reaching her third*: Adolescence, age fourteen. Virtue consists of all her strengths, including her miraculous beauty.

97. *every tongue is dumb*: No language can express her deepest truth.

98. *you alone have learned*: But cannot succeed in expressing.

100. *eyes cannot look*: Though he might gaze like an eagle, he must eventually look away.

103. *burned more sweetly*: Consumed itself in trying to express her hidden sweetness.

105. *life for you a bitter thing*: Cf. line 73.

106. *revolving wheel*: Fortune's distinguishing feature.

107. *spins our thread*: That determines the length of an individual life.

108. *sad and certain prophet*: Fortune's divination became a reality.

110. *starve for death*: Wait out his life in want. Cf. 323.74–75.

326 SONNET

Death has usurped mortal Love's domain, but it cannot deny his angel her celestial glory. For earlier sonnets with this rhyme scheme, see poems 13 and 94.

1. *power to the limit*: Cf. 325.54–57.

1–4. *cruel Death*: Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* VIII: "Morte villana, di pietà nemica."

4. *meager grave*: Cf. 304.9 and 323.23.

5. *you have despoiled*: Taken away her material substance.

7. *worth, which never dies*: Cf. Horace, *Odes* IV, 8, 28: "dignum laude virum Musa vetat mori."

8. *the naked bones*: Corresponding to the *poca fossa* of line 4.

9. *Heaven has had the rest*: The soul of Laura, light and flower of Heaven.

10. *as in a brighter sun*: Increased by the light of Laura.

11. *will not forget her*: The worth that never dies. Cf. Ps. 111:7.

12–14. *In such great victory . . .*: He addresses a prayer to Laura with the *voi* form of respect, the only use of it in Part II (Zingarelli).

12–13. *take, / . . . pity on me*: In the sense of "be conquered by" (*Vinca*).

327 SONNET

He shows how he will turn the tables on Death, expanding on the ideas of poem 326.

1. *The aura*: The essence of Laura.

2. *the sight of the sweet laurel*: Her material form.

3. *the light and place*: Internal guide to peace.

4. *he took away*: Death.

5. *sun when covered*: Eclipsed.

8. *fills my body's weight*: The shadow of his own encroaching death.

9. *a short sleep*: Her mortal life.

my lovely lady: Reverting to the familiar *tu* form. Cf. 326.12–14.

11. *a soul becomes one*: *S' interna,* that is, penetrates with the intellect. Cf. 279.13–14.

12. *has any power*: Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IX, 446 ff.: "Si quid mea carmina possunt, nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet aevo."

13. *noble minds*: Corresponding to Heaven's "chosen souls."

328 SONNET

When he last saw her he did not know she was soon to die, although his eyes and heart told him what his mind could not accept.

1. *The last, alas*: A lamentation similar to that in poem 314: "Oh my mind that, foreseeing grievous loss."

3. *turned my heart to melting snow*: Recalling 242.1–8 and later the truce of poem 316. Cf. Ovid, *Heroides* XIII, 52: "More nivis lacrymae, sole madentis, eunt."

4. *perhaps foretelling*: Cf. 325.91–105.

5. *a fever coming on*: A presentiment of death. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* XVII, 85.

6. *thoughts grow weak*: Compare the invading dark thoughts of 327.8.

8. *imperfect good*: Incomplete.

11. *wretched and poor*: His light eclipsed. Cf. 327.5–6.

12. *splendor chaste and new*: A glance radiating with pity, newly perceived.

14. *somewhere else*: In Heaven; cf. 250.14.

329 SONNET

Misunderstanding clouded his vision that last day he saw her.

1. *O day*: Just before he took leave of her the last time.

2. *stars conspired*: Stars that have determined her destiny from the beginning. Cf. 325.65 ff.

3. *O faithful glance*: Cf. 328.9–14.

4. *when I left*: A parting first alluded to in passing in poem 242.

5. *now I'm aware*: As if he had recovered from a fever. Cf. 328.5–8.

6. *unstable thoughts*: His failed beliefs. He uses a similar phrase in 304.8 to describe his new and rash verses.

7. *to lose a part*: To be only physically separated from her, not in every way deprived of her.

11. *sweet, bitter look*: Her glance with its foreknowledge of death. "Inscribed" signals that her death was implicit in his poetry.

12. *was placed a veil*: His groundless and unstable thoughts in line 6. Cf. Dante, *Inferno* IX, 61–63.

13. *truly saw*: With his heart's prescience.

14. *all of a sudden*: The swiftness of her death proclaimed so often, most emphatically in poem 323.

330 SONNET

In this sonnet concluding a series of five, the message in Laura's eyes on that last day is given full expression.

2. *Take all you can*: "Of pleasure in the sight of me" (Biagioli), intimate words of a lover.

3. *see me here again*: Cf. 250.14 and 328.14.

4. *a reluctant foot*: Cf. poems 242–244.

5. *panther*: A creature of the night, brave and ferocious. Cf. 233.12 and 238.2.

6. *too slow*: The mind first had failed to understand what the heart perceived.

8. *what you see now*: The extent of his losses.

9. *In silence*: The words were "inscribed" in her eyes. Cf. 329.11.

9. *sparkling more than ever*: Never before so full of promise.

10. *O friendly lights*: His eyes turned toward hers in a state of truce.

11. *made of us your mirrors*: The source of self-knowledge.

14. *to make you angry*: Anger has not been mentioned since poem 270 but now resurfaces to become a frequent theme. It reinforces the panther image in line 5.

he lets age: Grow bitter.

331 CANZONE

A summation of a number of sonnets that recall their last goodbye, this canzone reveals a man overtaken by regret and reduced to a few memories, one who wishes he might have died at that moment when he was happy.

1. *I used to leave behind*: On so many occasions when he traveled, which exiled him from Laura.

3. *following not my will*: Going in response to outside circumstances, denying his first love.

star's calling: The one that determined his destiny at birth. Petrarch was born under the sign of Cancer, a moon child.

5. *none more bitter*: More war-torn. Leo was rising when he was born.

7. *surrender arms*: Abruptly. The suddenness of this response reflects his recent awakening in 329.5.

10. *Memory alone is left me*: His hope for renewal has been blown away by the winds of circumstance.

15. *diminishes*: Deserts him just before he has won his goal.

17. *that cherished food*: Cf. poem 207 for an extended use of this metaphor.

devoured by the one: The beast, Death. Cf. 120.5–8 and 256.5–8.

19–20. *pain / . . . becomes*: As with the runner who sees the trophy go to someone else, sweet victory becomes bitter loss.

22. *A mist or dust*: Ephemeral, like the psalmist.

30. *if only*: If only he were judged worthy.

32. *poorly skilled*: He refers to the imperfect understanding he lamented in poems 328–330.

33. *beneath that lovely brow*: Mirrored in the tear-filled eyes of Laura at their last parting.

35–36. *by dying sooner*: If he had read her grieving eyes more clearly, they would have counseled him to die in advance of her. For other maxims on the art of dying, see 86.4, 140.14, 152.14, and 207.55.

38. *cruel fate began to envy*: Cf. 323.69.

39. *that rich dwelling place*: Laura's eyes.

40. *inscribed in letters*: Translated her silent tears.

44. *my life would not have died*: The living, breathing subject matter of his verse.

46. *my hopes are scattered*: His laurel tree struck down, leaves, flowers, and seed "strewn on the ground." Cf. 323.55–60.

47. *a bit of earth*: Petrarch seems to ask the question, will his scattered rhymes be preserved or will they be buried in an unmarked grave?

48. *I tremble*: He fears for his imperfect soul.

50. *another yearning*: Alluding to his eyes straying from their goal. Cf. 325.99–103.

52. *clear on my lady's brow*: Cf. 325.27–28: "a column / crystalline."

56. *in her presence*: *In sua presenzia* suggests that he himself might have brought about his, and therefore her, early disappearance.

59. *prepare . . . a throne*: For the new angel on her way.

62. *Die while you are happy*: While he still has his powers.

64. *die well*: While loving her honorably. Cf. 140.14.
delay no longer: Do not live on, nursing a depleted talent.

332 Double Sestina

The last of the nine sestinas, this is doubled from six to twelve stanzas using the same rhymes, with a three line congedo that serves the whole. The imagery draws from the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, shading from light to darkness and then to double darkness, and concluding with an old wish that he might pass the moment of death with his love.

1–6. *My kindly fortune*: For the sake of contrast he paints an unusually happy picture in these opening lines. Carducci cites Boccaccio, *Decameron* X, 10.

5. *turned to grief*: Cf. 292.14: "my lyre now has turned to playing tears."

6. *hate life . . . yearn for death*: The thesis that governs the entire sestina.

7. *inexorable Death*: Responding to line 1.

8. *you give me reason*: Perhaps, during the many years before her death, he was unhappy without reason.

12. *harsh torment*: *Martir*, that is, his need to bear witness, to tell the whole truth even if he endangers his soul.

13–18. *To what end* . . . : The elisions and repetitions of *ov'è* and *u'* in this stanza create an unusual sound effect.

14. *talking of anger*: Recently, for example, in 330.14.

16. *a gentle heart would hear*: Laura and other noble souls whose ears he sought with his poetry—the elect.

17. *talk of love through all those nights*: *Favoleggiar*, literally, light-hearted talk.

18. *I talk now*: Empty words, missing the beauty of her physical form.

20. *sweetness seasoned*: That is, mitigated, for example, by the soothing painful sounds in the phrasing of the preceding stanza.

26. *set it in tears*: Turned tears to words. Cf. 331.40

28. *changing with my thought my style*: Altering the mode of his verse to match the present subject matter.

29. *begging and rebegging*: Doubling his want.

31. *sleep has run away*: Cf. line 21, where sweetness entered, awakening him. Here he is emptied of sleep.

32. *my hoarse rhymes*: Note the alliteration in *roche rime*, a device repeated almost monotonously in these stanzas.

37. *who was more happy*: *Lieto*, with its intrinsic sense of "forgetfulness."

39. *doubling up his grief*: A sestina normally ends with the thirty-ninth line. Not only does he double the number of stanzas but also the number of times he must use the same rhymes.

41. *I lived on hope*: The sole basis for his happiness.

43. *Death gave me death*: It killed his inspiration by taking away Laura. Cf. 327.7.

46. *breath . . . rain*: Corresponding to "sighs and tears." Cf. poems 227 and 228.

48. *raised up*: Directing his pen toward its noble object.

51. *Orpheus did Eurydice*: In Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X, Orpheus sang so eloquently of

his grief and desire for Eurydice's return to life that he brought activity in the Underworld to a standstill. Cf. 323.61–72; and Virgil, *Georgics* IV, 453–527.

without rhymes: In a less artful, more spontaneous and persuasive outpouring, as in ancient Greek song.

52. *more than I've been*: Doubling his happiness.

54. *close my two fountains*: Let him die.

56. *grave loss . . . grieving style*: A negative contrast to the positive sweet breath and nocturnal rain of line 46.

58. *begging Death*: Cf. line 29, where the begging was doubled.

59. *take me from this place*: Remove him, creating an emptiness where dream and illusion prevailed before.

62. *beyond sorrow and tears*: In Heaven where painful emotions are left behind.

64. *change of style*: From angry to resigned.

65. *pleased her, perhaps*: An element of doubtful hope first introduced in poem 5.

66. *make bright day for her*: Her day has become eternal.

67. *all of you who sigh*: Other love poets. Cf. line 16.

72. *make me happy*: Death will be his refuge, both an end and a beginning.

73. *make me happy in a few nights*: Cure him of his misery. Compare the one day he asks for in 22.33 and 237.35. Here he introduces to his song a bargaining tone that will be recalled in poem 360.

333 Sonnet

This sonnet, like an *envoi* to the preceding sestina, begins the collection's last long sonnet series, twenty-six in number.

1. *Go now*: Cf. 153.1; and Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto* IV, 3: "Ita, leves elegi, doctas ad consulis aures."

to the hard stone: Her grave in Avignon.

3. *there call her, who will respond*: Cf. 318.14, where he called and no one responded.

4. *be darkly buried*: In the "mud" of Avignon. Cf. 259.11.

6. *the horrors of this sea*: In 151.1 this dark sea is a metaphor for the corruption of the papal court.

7. *her scattered leaves*: His poetry, symbolized by the felled laurel. He has made the reader a partner in this sad process of selection.

8. *step after step*: Returning through time as he gathers his poems.

9. *alive and dead*: Poems *in vita* and *in morte.*

10. *now immortalized*: "Translated" to Heaven.

11. *the world may know*: Through the poet's "speaking."

12. *Let her watch*: Cf. 332.64: "she'll surely recognize my change of style."

14. *call me*: From the side of light.

draw me: By making him resemble her.

334 Sonnet

As in poem 333, this sonnet sends up a sigh of hope that she will intercede for him.

2. *pity's strong*: It still has the force to win forgiveness.

4. *my faith is to the world*: In the way it reflects her light. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXIV, 64–96, regarding the bright coin of faith.

5. *used to fear me*: Doubted his trustworthiness.

knows for certain: Now that he has been tested.

6–7. *I have always / wanted*: To praise her with honesty.

7. *heard words*: If she read his verse superficially while she lived.

8. *now she can see*: With an inner light.

9. *Heaven will grieve at last*: The angels will pity him.

10. *all my sighs*: His poems.

11. *returns to me*: In his dreams and visions since she died.

12. *these remains are left behind*: At the putting down ("al por giù") of his body, suggesting a written record. Cf. 332.26.

13. *that host of ours*: The elect souls in the Third Heaven.

14. *Christ and honesty*: One of the rare appearances of Christ's name in the *Canzoniere*. Cf. 28.90 and 138.8. *Onestate* is virtue in plenitude, *integer vitae*, the full meaning of which he continues to explore.

335 Sonnet

Since burning desire was spent with her death, the icy fear she has always inspired in him is all that he feels.

1. *Among a thousand ladies*: One standing out among an elect group.

3. *no false images*: In the beginning, when his verse was free of the by-products of an overheated imagination. Cf. 329.6.

5. *No signs of earth or mortal cares*: She seemed an angel.

7. *burned and froze for her so often*: Loved her through so many seasons.

8. *spread both its wings*: He opened himself to the full range of feeling.

10. *out of my sight completely*: Cf. 323.67–68: "but all the upper part / of her was shrouded in a mist of dark."

11. *and stiffen*: Literally, become numb (*torpo*).

12. *lofty windows*: Laura's eyes.

13. *she, who*: Death.

14. *found entrance*: The eyes are the first organ of the body to die, according to Pliny; see *Historia naturalis* XI, 69: "Cor primum nascentibus formari in utero tradunt, dein cerebrum, sicut tardissime oculus; sed hos primum mori, cor novissime" (Tassoni).

336 Sonnet

Considered among the most beautiful of Petrarch's sonnets, this poem establishes the exact date of Laura's death: 6 April 1348, on the same day and hour that he first saw her in 1327.

1. *She comes to mind*: Cochin suggested that Petrarch composed this sonnet upon rediscovering poem 211 in the summer of 1369 (Carducci).

2. *Lethe*: The river in which souls are immersed to wash away memory of the deeds and torments of this life. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVI, 108.

4. *of her own star*: Venus.

6. *so withdrawn*: In high humility collected in itself.

7. *It's truly she*: The reawakened subject of his thoughts. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXX, 73: “Yes, look at me! Yes, I am Beatrice!”

8. *I ask her for the gift*: Cf. 37.86–88: “and those decorous words / rare in the world, unique, / which were bestowèd on me so courteously.”

10. *like one mistaken*: Someone who has misjudged.

11. *have been deceived*: His mind deceives itself.

12. *You do know*: This date also was written into Petrarch's copy of Virgil's works (found in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana), in which he noted the date of their first encounter and the circumstances of his learning of her death in Parma on 19 May 1348.

337 Sonnet

He invested everything in the image of his goddess, combining in her all the wealth of East and West.

The order of the remaining poems in the *Canzoniere* was originally as follows: poems 339–351, 337, 362, 363, 365, 338, 352–361. Petrarch reordered them in the last year of his life by marking next to each one its new number in arabic numerals.

1. *in fragrance and in hue*: Virtue and beauty.
3. *fruits, flowers . . .*: A harvest that grew out of a seeding in the East.
6. *every ardent virtue*: Possessing the power to ignite virtue. Cf. 146.1.
7. *saw in its shadow*: Where the poet's eyes seek her form.
8. *my lord*: Love—in keeping with Laura a benign and potent force.
10. *burning, freezing*: Reaching extremes of love and fear.
11. *I was very happy*: *Felice*, rather than the more common *lieto*, suggesting “creative.”
12. *Her perfect qualities*: A wholeness more valued now in retrospect. Cf. 263.12–14.
13. *to adorn His Heaven*: As she in her love adorned the shade of the laurel.
14. *took her*: God desired her and won her.

338 Sonnet

Virtue's flowering departed the world, leaving him alone to grieve in a wasteland.

1. *You have left, Death*: Cf. 218.9–14.
2. *unarmed and blind*: Without her eyes.
3. *charm naked*: Nobility stripped of her lovely presence.
4. *me here, unconsoled*: Zingarelli compares him to Galahad when the Holy Grail was taken from England.
5. *courtesy exiled*: Her generosity no longer generates generosity.
6. *more have cause to grieve*: The world, which did not recognize her.
7. *the pure seed*: That generates love of virtue, producing new acts of valor.

8. *what will be second*: Who can succeed to perfection? This question is not answered until the final canzone. Cf. 366.55 ff.

10. *mankind's lineage*: All those born into this wasteland.

12. *The world did not know her*: Cf. John 1:9, "Mundus eum non cognovit."

13. *to weep*: To testify.

14. *now made lovely*: So much had her honesty and saintliness informed his verse.

339 Sonnet

For all the varied ways in which he put form to her loveliness while she lived, a language for her celestial immortality is beyond him.

1. *opened my eyes*: In the beginning.

2. *diligence*: Study of her person and her ways.

3. *but mortal*: Dying with Laura.

6. *forms*: Summoned in his dreams and visions of her since her death.

7. *no match*: Neither his intellect nor style could reach as far as Heaven to describe her there.

8. *not able to endure*: To be exposed for long periods of time. Cf. 325.99–100.

10. *prayers to God*: Her beauty, withheld from him in life, now humbly intercedes for him in Heaven.

11. *depthless seas*: The *infiniti abissi* can mean, figuratively, either chasms or hells.

12. *beyond one's wit*: *Stilo* (wit) plays on its similarity to *stilla* (drop) in line 11, as if his stony rhymes were just barely forming in the abyss.

14. *the brighter shines its light*: The more blinded he is by its intensity, that is, the more he seeks to seize her unveiled truth with his mind, the less he understands of it. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXX, 25.

340 Sonnet

As if his efforts in the preceding sonnets should have earned him some response, he prays for her appearance in his dreams.

1. *cherished pledge*: His faith. Cf. 29.57 and 39.14.

2. *Heaven keeps for me*: Like an investment.

3. *why is pity late*: What is delaying the interest on that investment?

4. *life's habitual support*: Love of Laura.

5. *Sleep . . . worthy*: When she came to him in dream.

7. *who delays its coming?*: A less than pious question, perhaps.

9–11. *because of which . . .* : These lines draw divine pity down to his own level in an unusual use of enjoinment of the tercets with the quatrains.

10. *feed upon another's torment*: Withhold reward, as Laura did.

11. *in his own realm is vanquished*: When mercy is not shown. Cf. Juvenal, *Satires* VI, 209.

12. *You, who can see*: The soul of Laura.

know my pain: *Il mio mal*, a phrase early commentators understood to mean his concupiscence.

14. *with your own shadow*: A specter of her divine form.

341 SONNET

Almost despite himself he receives a swift answer to his prayer, so encouraging that his interest in life is renewed.

2. *to carry through the heavens*: Acting as a go-between, carrying his laments directly to God.

4. *in her own way*: In this case, free of disdain.

5. *wretched heart*: One that's reduced in circumstance, as in poem 340.

6. *full of humility*: Altered from one who "will feed upon another's torment" in 340.10.

7. *draw back from death*: From the fires that consume him, but also, pursuing the metaphor of poem 340, to take back an allotment for his suffering.

10. *or with those words of hers*: He was doubly blessed.

11. *had meaning*: Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, 124; and Statius, *Thebais* V, 614.

13. *I was cruel to you*: By restraining him.

14. *things that would stop the sun*: Bring all creation to a halt. This hint of apocalypse marks the beginning of the end as Petrarch centers his thoughts more and more on Heaven.

342 SONNET

Here Laura speaks again with words that heal.

1. *my lord*: Love.

5. *no equal or a second*: Cf. 338.8: "once highest worth is dead, what will be second?" Cf. also Horace, *Odes* I, 12, 18–20.

6. *comes to my sickbed*: Where he languishes from the fevers of life (l. 3).

7. *on such a one*: The image of Laura in this sonnet suggested to some commentators a rendering of the Beatific Vision, although these words are studiedly noncommittal. Cf. 340.14, where Laura appeared to him as an *ombra*, an apparition of his imperfect mind.

8. *on the edge*: That is, closer than she has ever been before.

9. *that hand which I so much desired*: Cf. poems 199–201, 208, 302, and 72.56.

10. *she dries my eyes*: Cf. 126.37–39.

12. *knowledge with despair*: Assuming, upon approaching the verge of death, that it is a cause for sorrow and tears, a conclusion Socrates spoke against in Plato's *Phaedo*. Cf. *Familiares* VII, 6.

13. *Stop weeping*: Cf. poems 279–280.

14. *as much alive as I'm not dead*: Would he could gain faith in eternal life from her experience of dying.

343 SONNET

He lives only because she sustains him in dream.

1. *Heaven now esteems*: Chooses as its lovely adornment.

2. *the tilting of her golden head*: Laura pensive.

5. *still alive*: Cf. 342.14: "Were you as much alive as I'm not dead," and 341.7–8.

6. *makes one doubt*: Her image retains something of the corporeal, something of the divine; it hovers in uncertainty.

8. *so quick to help me*: Cf. 341.1.

when dawn comes: As he is about to reawaken into life. Visions at dawn were often thought to be prophetic—closest to truth. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* IX, 16–18.

9. *what sweet welcomings*: A mutual exchange of greetings.

11. *the long history*: Cf. 285.12: "explaining things that happen in our life."

12. *appears to strike*: Dissolving her shadow.

13. *she knows the ways*: The ways of virtue (Leopardi), or the several paths over which she seeks him where he is (Zingarelli).

14. *bathed in her tears*: Sorely grieved for him. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* I, 228; and Dante, *Inferno* II, 116.

344 SONNET

His vision of a merciful Laura has vanished like a phantasm.

2. *know not when*: So little of the sweet was there, he has nearly forgotten it (Tassoni).

3. *well knows the truth*: Cf. 56.13–14: "before the day we finally depart / a man cannot consider himself blest."

5. *glory of our world*: Irony may be intended, since Petrarch has always before damned his age for abandoning her in its search for riches. Cf. 24.6, 248.4, 261, and 338.12.

6. *makes bright and lovely*: An example to the world, an ornament to heaven.

9. *Cruel Death*: In poem 283, after Laura spoke of awakening to the internal light in poem 279, he expressed similar recriminations. Cf. 342.12–14.

robbed me: Removed his treasure to Heaven.

10. *great bliss*: He plays on the words *onorare-onore* and their core sense of "gold." His vision of her alive in Heaven cannot truly sustain him.

14. *pour forth*: He continues to write lamentations out of habit. Note the equivocal rhyme *verso/verso* in lines 12 and 14. The style echoes Boccaccio in *Decameron* IX, 3, the tale of the pregnant Calandrino (Carducci).

345 SONNET

This sonnet expresses repentance for the lack of faith he has demonstrated since poem 339 in those metaphors which sought from Heaven some palpable reward for his suffering. It begins Petrarch's final addition to Part II, transcribed in the last year of his life.

1. *My tongue*: His language, in spite of himself, because it is that of mortal love. Some editions read *la mal lingua* (rather than *la mia lingua*), meaning an evil, rash, or imprudent tongue (see Neri and Durling).

2. *move in the wrong way*: Was forced to bring her down to mortal reality and have her speak in his erring tongue.

4. *that which*: Cf., for example, 344.10–11: "nor does great bliss of her free, lovely soul / afford my adverse state some consolation."

if it were true: Compare the central conceit of poem 206.

would not be right: Cf. 339.12: "for pen cannot extend beyond one's wit."

6. *my sad condition*: His state of turbulence.

7–8. *the fact . . .* : She has gathered herself in God in death as in life. The verb *domesticarsi* appears just this once in the *Canzoniere*.

9. *console myself*: Find peace within, corresponding to her example in line 8.

10. *in this hell*: This world as he finds it, in particular court life. Cf. 138.7 and 259.11.

11. *to die and live alone*: Reversing order, as he has already done, in a sense, because when Laura died he died. Reversing order has been his pattern in this period of recollection and repentence beginning with poem 270.

14. *my eternal Lord*: Christ.

346 SONNET

This version of Laura welcomed into Heaven by the angels demonstrates how she comes and goes for him. The sonnet has been compared with works of Dante, Cino da Pistoia, and the troubadours. At some point in his transcriptions, Petrarch wrote the Roman numeral CCC next to it.

1. *The chosen angels*: The choicest guests at a coronation.

blessèd souls: Lesser than angels but equal before the eyes of God, a hierarchy such as Dante's in the *Paradiso*.

2. *Heaven's citizens*: Referring to the City of God. Cf. 53.44.

on the first day: Laura's rising to Heaven, like that of the elect bound for the highest echelons, was not delayed.

5. *What light is this*: Sending reverberations through the crowd.

6–7. *so lovely / a soul*: Beauty housed in her soul, which is her true form collected in itself. Cf. 345.7.

7. *has never risen*: Nowhere has Laura's uniqueness been given such emphatic expression. Cf. Petrarch, *Africa* VI, 1, the arrival of Sophonisba in the Underworld.

9. *changed her dwelling place*: Left flesh for spirit.

10. *is equal*: She joins her peers.

12. *if I am following her*: Linked to him in Heaven as on earth.

13. *strain to Heaven*: Raise themselves up (*al ciel ergo*) in order to perfect themselves.

14. *that I hurry*: That he come more quickly.

347 SONNET

With humble touches he has enthroned his queen in Heaven and now asks her to pray that he might join her quickly.

1. *in our Maker's presence*: For *principio nostro*, cf. Rev. 1:8, "Ego sum alpha et omega, principium et finis."

3. *glorious throne*: Next to God Himself.

4. *pearls and purple*: Cf. 263.10 and 185.9: "A purple gown all bordered with sky-blue." *Ostro* is used only once in the *Canzoniere* and can also mean, in poetic language, south wind.

5. *rare wonder*: The *raro mostro* of the original is like the French expression *sacre monstre*, meaning an icon.

6. *in the face of Him*: Enlightened by his truth.

who sees all things: The phrase echoes Dante, *Paradiso* XXI, 49–50, where Dante is satirizing the indulgences of the Church.

7. *pure faith of mine*: Faith unveiled, corresponding to "unadorned" in line 4.

8. *so much ink*: "Ink" alludes to the infernal nature of his output, written in hell's colors.

10. *what it feels now*: With her in Heaven. Cf. 313.7 and 314.12–14.

11. *sunlight of your eyes*: Of her gaze turned on him as God's eyes now are turned on her.

12. *So then*: The *dunque* in this line comes as a final flourish of satisfaction.

to make amends: To make reparation for his losses. Cf. poems 340–343.

348 SONNET

As if to hold up for "amends" the simple elements of her created beauty, he lists them once again.

2. *most beautiful hair*: Taking the second place of honor.

3. *seem not as lovely*: Diminished in his world and in his wording. Cf. poem 90.

4. *from*: Repeated use of "from" in the quatrains reinforces the sense of absence.

5. *hands and arms that could have conquered*: Possessing the power to seduce.

8. *body made in Paradise*: Her divine movement and form, reduced to their simplest components.

10. *the heavenly King and his winged couriers*: God and his angels, not unlike Jove and his messengers.

13. *she who can see every thought*: Cf. 347.6: "in the face of Him who sees all things."

14. *obtain for me*: In her role as intercessor.

349 SONNET

Straining to hear the answer to the heavenly plea Laura might make on his behalf, he readies himself for a liberating flight to Heaven.

1. *hear the messenger*: For an amusing sidelight on heavenly messengers, see *Familiares* I, 5.

4. *so reduced*: *Dimesso* suggests having even his small portion taken from him.

5. *hardly recognize myself*: Cf. the "naked and blind" of 348.11.

7. *to know just when*: The moment of his dying.

11. *heavy, frail garment*: The body, but also his poetry. Cf. 23.24 and 121.4 for other uses of *gonna*.

14. *my Lord*: Carducci records several critical opinions hostile to the "prosaic" quality of this poem; he himself called it "idealità purissima e suprema."

350 SONNET

Originally poem 337, this concludes, in its new position, a cycle begun in poem 338, where Petrarch awaits the call of Laura, newly crowned queen of Heaven.

1. *frail and perishable good*: Cf. 349.10–11, and Ovid, *Ars amatoria* II, 113: "Forma bonum fragile est."

4. *to my own sorrow*: Because he alone knew her.

5–7. *Nature . . . / . . . poured into one*: In Laura's case Nature made an exception to her usual harmonious scheme, investing in Laura all her skill.

6. *others poor*: Other ladies, but also the poet himself, left behind with his fragments.

7. *all her riches*: *Largitate* echoes Cicero in *De inventione*, speaking of Zeuxis the painter, renowned for his realism.

9. *there never was*: Cf. poem 338, to which this sonnet seems to respond, especially lines 12–14.

12. *quickly vanished*: Decomposed.

13. *the brief sight*: *La poca vista* is a strangely dismissive way to refer to Laura after all this time. Cf. 328.1–2.

14. *her holy eyes*: In order to please Laura in Heaven.

351 SONNET

This poem was numbered originally 362. A fresh evaluation of Laura's meaning for him in fresh language, the sonnet praises her chaste beauty while seeking to justify her anger, the "lovely variation" that leads him along the right path.

1. *sternness . . . repulses*: Her disdain, given new expression.

2. *filled with a love*: What she takes away she gives back with desire for his own good.

4. *vain desires tempered*: Her sweet disdain aroused, restrained, and strengthened his ardent resolve.

7. *flower of virtuousness*: All virtues receiving their highest expression in her speech.

fountain of beauty: Zingarelli notes that in earlier poems these were reversed, the flower associated with beauty and the fountain with virtue.

8. *tore out*: Expurgated.

10. *a daring mind*: Presumptuous, as his language in this sonnet may be. Cf. 140.5–8.

11. *that which is forbidden*: That strays from her eyes and mouth, his source.

13–14. *was the root / of my salvation*: Connecting him with the divine. Cf. 321.5.

352 SONNET

This poem was originally numbered 363. Joy in his original vision of her flows out of the audacious thoughts of poem 351.

1. *Spirit so happy*: The soul of Laura, whom he addresses directly.

so very sweetly: Sweetness unmixed. Cf. 351.1: "Sweet sternness."

2. *would move those eyes*: Her every act having its source in her angelic soul.

4. *sounding in my mind*: Remembered for the pure beauty of its structure and sound (Tassoni).

6. *grass and violets*: Plants ever springing, ever dying.

8. *the feet of her*: Of the material Laura, moved by the spirit.

10. *with that soft veil*: The image of her lovely body made immortal in verse. Cf. 302.11.

12. *so did Love then leave the world*: Not having on earth another creature so beautiful in whom to dwell.

13. *and Courtesy*: One of the attributes of the Virgin.

the sun fell from the sky: Darkening the world, creating for him this wasteland. Cf. 338.1: "You have left, Death, the world without its sun."

353 SONNET

This was originally the second to last poem, number 365. Once again he feels moved to share his grief with the nightingale, inviting the bird to commiserate with him.

1. *little bird*: Cf. poems 310–311 and notes. The nightingale's song is, in the first order, beautiful, but it is prophetic in its secondary effects.

4. *happy months behind*: Petrarch uses the Provençal word *gai* for "happy."

7. *fly straight to the bosom*: Seek a kindred soul.

8. *painful grief*: Similar to that of the nightingale, which in folklore is loss of mate and offspring. Petrarch invites the bird to lend him some of its music (Carducci).

9. *our portions would be equal*: The poet's pain might be greater.

10. *her life*: The inspiration for his song.

14. *my pity*: Bring thoughts of his own grief to bear on that of the nightingale, who sings for the common people.

354 SONNET

This poem was originally numbered 364. As if preparing for a final song of praise, he turns back to his old counselor, Love, who confesses his inability to help.

3. *to speak of her*: To raise his style to the highest level, befitting his subject matter. Cf. poems 307–309.

4. *citizen of the celestial realm*: Cf. 346.2 Castelvetro commented on the way this image nevertheless mirrors the world.

5–6. *hit the final / mark of her praise*: Win her mercy with his eloquence.

6. *they cannot reach themselves*: Cannot express the "silent truth" that her soul is in Heaven. Cf. 309.9–14.

7. *had no equal*: Her glory was so great that it killed desire for a successor. Cf. 180.5–8 and 338.8 ff.

9. *all that I can do*: Love has no jurisdiction, for her model and successor cannot be found in this world.

10. *all good counsel*: Cf. poems 279, 285, 286, 330, and 342.

13. *let this suffice*: The memory of her form. Biagioli commented: "Now he touches on the beauty of her body; and however limited the space and innumerable the things to be described, Love hints at them, so that the desiring mind, through a thousand seductive images, arrives at the source of the one greatest beauty."

355 SONNET

This poem was originally numbered 338. The time is past for him to achieve the kind of glory in which merely breathing the sound of her name caused the soul to soar.

2. *deceive us . . . mortals*: Conceive us in a state of hope and innocence, and then take it away.

4. *ab experto*: A Tuscan folk expression meaning, "learned from experience," adapted from ecclesiastical Latin.

your frauds: Cf. 253.7: "O closed betrayal and loving kind of fraud."

5. *I accuse myself*: Who might have chosen differently. Cf. 296.1.

7. *eyes which I fixed*: He remained earthbound. Cf. 325.46–53.

10. *in a more secure direction*: Toward a higher goal.

12. *Not from your yoke, Love*: The pursuit and love of virtue and beauty.

13. *from my harms*: The weakness of his body.

you know with what effort: Spoken ironically, *ab experto*.

14. *virtue's no accident*: Words taken from Seneca, *Epistles* XXIX: "Non est ars quae ad effectum casu venit."

356 SONNET

This poem was orignially numbered 352. Love and memories of Laura's divine compassion return to gnaw at his consciousness.

1. *Into my weary sleep*: His deserved rest. In poem 355 he proposed an end to the struggle.

my sacred aura: The spirit of Laura reaching him in dream.

2. *I become courageous*: Daring, as in 351.10.

3. *tell her of the ills*: The "harms" of poem 355.

4. *were she still living*: When such intimacy was forbidden. Cf. 351.1: "Sweet sternness and repulses calmly dealt."

7. *I follow then*: A droll echo of Dante, who used this technique of carefully mapping out the story line in *Vita nuova*. He will tell the whole story, leaving nothing out.

8. *Love gnawed at me*: How he suffered from a pain that wouldn't go away—his desire.

9. *She is silent*: Mute, as she has been throughout, save for those words she has spoken in his imaginings.

colored with pity: Identical words were used in 26.3 where Dante was echoed.

10. *her look fixed all on me*: Laura existed for him alone, as Beatrice did for Dante. Cf. 355.7–8.

11. *tears, sincere*: Cf. 343.14: "her eyes and both her cheeks bathed in her tears."

12–14. *and then . . .* : The entire history of his love since their first exchange of glances in poem 3 is compressed into these lines.

357 SONNET

This poem was originally numbered 353. Laura's tears of poem 356 are forgotten in the light of day, which finds the poet strengthened for the journey ahead.

1. *Each day*: Tassoni noted the humble tone of this colloquialism, which raises again the subject of last days.

4. *by better roads*: Cf. 355.10: "in a more secure direction."

life without a care: That is, death.

7. *shines down into my heart*: In poem 277 this light was blocked by a veil of sorrow.

8. *count my time and losses*: He makes a balance sheet of his life.

10. *the King*: Cf. Rev. 19:16, "Rex regum et dominus dominantium."

12. *entered each vein*: Threats of death strengthened her because of belief in the transubstantiation of the blood of Christ. The phrasing echoes Dante, *Purgatorio* XXIII, 74–75.

14. *did not seem to trouble her clear brow*: If Laura died fearless, in the manner of Christ, why not he?

358 SONNET

This poem was originally numbered 354. The final sonnet in a series of twenty-six, this sonnet finds him ready to welcome the coming of death as Laura did before him.

3. *To die*: Literally, to die well (*morir ben*), the subject of numerous poems; cf. 59.15, 86.4, 152.14, 171.4, 135.81, 207.65–91, and 331.43–44.

what need: A clear grammatical error here echoes Boccaccio, *Decameron* IX, 3: "Ci bisogna . . . tre paia di buoni capponi," the tale of Calandrino buying the farm (Carducci).

5. *not stingy*: What might be called a back-handed compliment. Cf. 353.11.

6. *broke the gates of Tartar*: Referring to the Harrowing of Hell, in pseudoepigraphical works Christ's act of delivering the blessed from the Underworld and blocking the dead from their sight. Dante worked this event into the narrative structure of his *Inferno*.

7. *it seems I take my strength*: He is not sure, but he hopes.

8. *So come Death*: Cf. *Vita nuova* XXIII.

10. *were it not*: Corresponding to "it seems" in line 7, a note of doubt.

13. *with her I lived*: In his imaginings of Heaven.

14. *ended my day*: His moment in the sun.

359 CANZONE

This poem was originally numbered 355. Laura descends to his bedside to comfort him one more time. Carducci and Chiari dated this poem "molti anni dopo 1348." It was added to Vat. Lat. 3195 in the last year of Petrarch's life.

1. *faithful comforter*: Laura, because she has never deserted him. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XVIII, 16.

3. *on my left side*: The side of his heart. Such a sign augured well in ancient Roman times (Chiari).

5. *in my anguish, and in fear*: In reaction to her appearance, fear that he must ready himself for death.

7–8. *little branch of palm / and a laurel one*: See lines 48 ff.

8. *from her fair bosom*: She appears in the flesh as she was in life.

10. *Empyrean*: The highest heaven where God dwells. Petrarch no longer speaks of Venus, the Third Heaven.

10–11. *from those holy parts / I came*: His personal angel, moved by divine concern.

12. *With words and gestures*: Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* III, 94.

13. *humbly and then I ask*: He strikes a tone of one eager to be instructed.

14–17. *The doleful waves*: Not even Heaven, seat of eternal happiness, is out of reach of his verse. Cf. Dante, *Vita nuova* XLI, 1–4.

17. *disturb my peace*: Cf. Statius, *Sylvae* VI, 96: "Quid caram crucias tam saevis luctibus umbram?"

26. *a thing he sees up close*: Knows by intense study.

30. *had not been preordained*: Laura alive, so obviously one of the elect, was reason enough to believe in the existence of Heaven. Cf. Rom. 8:30, "Quos assumpsit, hos praedestinavit, hos et vocavit; et quos vocavit, hos et justificavit; quos autem justificavit, illos et glorificavit."

36. *an infant in my crib*: He would stop history before it took a turn for the worse. Cf. Propertius II, 13: "Atque utinam primis animan me ponere cunis Iussisset quaevis de tribus una soror."

37. *love's tempering*: The icy fire of desire.

38. *Why do you struggle*: *Distempre* renders impotent the effect of love's tempering. Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* XXX, 91–97.

41. *vain chattering*: His discourses on love and death.

44. *gathering one of these branches*: The palm and the laurel that she holds out to him.

46. *what implications*: What weight of meaning is carried by these words?

47. *You can answer for yourself*: She chides him for playing dumb.

48. *one of them*: The laurel.

49. *The palm is victory*: The palm, a symbol of reconciliation, was the Tree of Life in Babylonian times. Christ's followers went out to meet him carrying palm boughs when he entered Jerusalem victorious, riding on a donkey. Cf. John 12:12 and 16:33.

50–51. *laurel means / triumph*: Castelvetro noted, "enjoyment of the victory, then, that another has won." Her virtue was a blessing which he then used to advantage in his verse. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* VII, 4: "ossaque nomen Hesperia in magna, si qua est ea gloria, signat."

52. *who gave me strength enough*: Whose life was not "distempered" by love.

53. *if you're being forced*: *Sforza*, like *distempre* (line 38), undoes the effect of *forza* in the preceding line. Earthly love dissipates energy, heavenly love concentrates it.

56. *blond hair and the golden knot*: His own words, arousing his desire. Cf. poem 90.

58. *Do not err*: Laura scolds. In *Purgatorio* XXXIII, 28–33, Dante the pilgrim exhibits a similar inappropriate response when Beatrice comes near, and she admonishes him.

60. *I'm naked spirit*: To paraphrase 23.83, what he sees before him, then, is not what she is, perhaps.

63. *I am allowed to seem so*: Divine pity moved Laura to his bedside in the guise of her mortal form.

64. *shall be, still lovelier*: When her body is restored at the Resurrection.

65. *once so harsh and kind*: She was once the instrument of divine love's tempering, strengthening him through pity and fear.

70. *shattered stone to pieces*: Cf. 304.14 and 341.44.

71. *as does my sleep*: He awakens from his dream. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV, 25: "Post ea discedunt pariter somnusque deusque."

360 CANZONE

This poem was originally numbered 356. Petrarch's most openly humorous canzone, it is an ingenious defense of a life spent pursuing the whole truth in the service of his lady. The lover defends himself against Love before the Court of Justice; Reason listens to both sides and having heard, smiles and withholds her final opinion. A model for this form has been found in the Book of Job.

1. *old . . . sweet . . . cruel*: Petrarch begins in a lawyerly manner with this elaborate bow toward his adversary.

2. *I had called to the justice*: Summoned Love to court in order to weigh his life in a more accurate balance.

4. *sitting at its summit*: Reason. Cf. Cicero, *Tusculum* I, 10: "Plato triplicem finxit animum, cuius principatum, idest rationem, in capite, sicut in arce, posuit." The other two cognitive faculties in the Platonic scheme are Sense and the Imagination. When the "queen" sees all three aspects of an argument simultaneously, she speaks from insight.

5. *gold . . . refined in flames*: The worth of the poet's soul will be measured by the truth scavenged from his painful experience of life. Cf. Wisdom of Solomon 3:6, speaking of the souls of the just: "Tamquam aurum in fornace probavit illos."

8. *begs for justice*: For a true understanding of the nature of his guilt.

9. *my left foot*: Cf. poem 67 and Dante, *Inferno* I, 30. The traditional ecclesiastical reading for *manco piede* is sexual deviation, although Petrarch's wanderings off the safe track have taken the classical form of philosophical inquiry, ironic in nature.

11. *scorn and anger*: Her honest love turned to disdain when base desire took control of him.

15. *then I hated life*: Cf. poems 323 and 332.

17–18. *good and useful / paths*: In normal human pursuit of peace and safety.

20. *what wit has the words*: A variation on 339.12.

21. *all my unhappiness*: To tell his entire life history, the whole story.

24. *honey scarce*: Too few joys, in sum, expressed in poems of praise that might bring about his redemption.

vinegar and aloe: Too much bitterness expressed in his poems of suffering and righteous blame that might lead to his purgation.

31–32. *made me love my God / less*: Because he invested all his thoughts in her.

34. *I care for nothing*: He has become neutral in this war.

35. *In that . . . counselor*: Love of truth often obliged him to seek a variety of advice: for example, that of Glory in poem 119, of Love himself in poem 268, of Fortune in poem 325, and of Laura in poem 359.

36. *my young desire*: Springing up even now in his suit before Reason.

37. *cruel whetstone*: On which he sharpened the blade of his political wit. Cf. Horace, *Odes* II, 8, 14: "Ferus et Cupido semper ardentes acuens sagittas cote cruenta."

38. *fierce, bitter yoke*: Laboring in Love's service.

39. *high, bright intellect*: *Altero* suggests that Petrarch speaks tongue in cheek.

40. *other gifts*: Eloquence, for example, and physical beauty. Cf. "Letter to Posterity."

42. *I cannot turn*: He is intransigent, a living representation of the compulsive force of Love.

44. *I am despoiled*: Stripped bare, revealed.

45. *sweet habit*: To expose the ties, the chains, the knots and coils of Love in his verse.

46–55. *He made me search . . .*: A brief summation of his sufferings described paradoxically as flights of seeking.

46. *wilderness*: Carducci thought he referred to Germany.

47. *rapacious thieves*: Identified elsewhere as Love, Death, and Time.

50. *the mountains . . .*: The metaphorical paths he has taken through the lore and language of all these regions "in exile" from Tuscany. The fact that Petrarch traveled through Europe all his life adds another dimension to these lines.

52. *winter in strange months*: Despair following the death of Laura in April 1348, out of season because she died in full bloom.

54. *this one or my other foe*: Neither Love nor Laura.

55. *a single moment*: *Punto*, as in a sense of painful pleasure that is never absent.

66. *no bell has sounded*: *Sonò . . . squilla* suggests both a tolling of the hours and a sharp summons. Cf. 53.55, 109.6, and 143.7.

69. *worm gnaw at old wood*: Remorse and pity feed on an old man because he has softened.

74. *and others, too*: The real targets of his criticism who have been suffering his attacks for years.

76. *My adversary bitterly reproaching*: Love, the prosecutor.

79. *I shall tell you entirely*: Point for point, leaving nothing out. Cf. Job 21, where Job refutes his friends' arguments one by one.

81. *selling little words, or rather lies*: Like an unscrupulous lawyer, in order to have his way with Laura. Petrarch studied law until the death of his father in 1326, when he turned to ecclesiastical studies and poetry.

83. *boredom . . . delights*: From the practice of "law" to love poetry.

84–85. *pure and clean*: Showed him his desire's true goal—virtue—behind the veil of worldly entanglements.

87. *in a sweet life which he calls misery*: Reversing line 83, so that *dolce vita* becomes *noia* in the lover's mind.

88. *risen to some fame*: Fame which so quickly changes to infamy.

90. *risen on its own*: Without a knowledge of Love's action through all history. Cf. line 1.

91. *Achilles . . . Atrides*: Achilles' favorite slave girl, Briseis, was stolen from him by Agamemnon (Atrides), arousing Achilles' vengeful wrath against the Greeks in the Trojan War.

92. *Hannibal*: Who took vengeance on the Romans.

93. *and another*: Scipio Africanus the Elder, hero of Petrarch's *Africa*.

96. *fall in base love*: Hannibal reputedly with a prostitute in Puglia, Scipio with a handmaiden.

97. *for this one*: The poet, whose similarity to these heroes lies in his vengeful anger.

100. *had Lucretia back*: The exemplary heroine of poems 260 and 263.

106. *wormwood*: Cf. the "vinegar and aloe" of line 24. This and Laura's scorn had a salutary effect on him. Cf. poem 351, where he acknowledges this himself.

107. *full joy of other women*: An allusion to the love of slave girls mentioned above.

108. *good seed rotten fruit*: Love seeded him with Laura's example and was rewarded with ingratitude.

111. *knights and ladies*: An allusion to lines 17–18: "how many good and useful paths I disdained. . . ." Love gave him a choice; he could have remained in the safety of the orthodox, basking in fame, rather than flying in the face of it as he did overtly and covertly in his numerous attacks on "the world"—an expression for the court in Petrarch's time.

113. *among the brilliant wits*: These are not unlike women who grant full joys in line 107, since they did not require his self-sacrifice, as Laura did. Petrarch includes in his satire certain members of the learned and cultured class, perhaps other poets.

115. *collect his poetry*: *Conserve*, meaning literally "preserve for posterity."

117. *murmurmer of the courts*: He might have been a lawyer or a flatterer of kings—a sycophant.

118. *make him famous*: For *divulgo*, see the notes of poem 168.

119. *in my own school*: The history of love, where one learns about thievery, wrath, revenge, and sacrifice, and, on occasion, peace, pleasure, and joy. Cf. lines 91–105.

121. *To mention finally*: With words that both give and take away.

122. *a thousand vicious acts*: Disloyalties to Love.

125. *shy and modest*: By birth, before he became enamored.

127. *a deep impression*: The original wound taken from Love.

130. *from her, and me he criticizes*: The three personae are linked grammatically as one, even in their degree of culpability.

131. *Nocturnal ghosts*: Perhaps recalling the poet's dreams in poems 339–358.

135. *regrets and grieves*: He rejected Love's gifts as insufficient evidence of his worth.

142. *from one thing*: *Sembianza* suggests that he could have sought in Laura one resemblance to the divine after the other, as if climbing a spiritual ladder.

144. *in his own verse*: Cf. 72.1–30.

146. *I gave him as a column*: The Laura of 126.6—living, dynamic, sustaining.

147. *I scream out loud*: The lover's cri de coeur. Cf. Job 19:7, "Ecce clamabo vim patiens, et nemo audiet: vociferabor, et non est que judicet," and Dante, *Purgatorio* XXVI, 39: "each one tries to outshout the other's cry."

153. *each one of us concludes*: Each expecting the lady's sympathies to be with him.

155. *she with a smile*: Befitting the subject matter. Cf. Job 40:3, "Numquid irritum facies judicium meum."

157. *I will need more time*: Carducci notes that this canzone inverts the arguments of the *Secretum*, putting St. Augustine's words into the lover's mouth and Francesco's into Love's.

361 Sonnet

This poem was originally numbered 357. The discord of poem 360 is calmed by a look in the mirror. He is old.

1. *faithful mirror*: An advisor who doesn't lie.

2. *changing skin*: Rough like the bark of a tree.

3. *diminished strength and liveliness*: In mind and body. Cf. the "old wood" of 360.69.

5. *obey whatever nature says*: Try to be like what you see. Cf. Cicero, *De senectute* II.

6. *takes power from us to oppose her*: Has her own way of snuffing out his desire.

7–8. *putting out a fire / I wake up*: A suddenness that recalls poem 323. Carducci cites St. Augustine: "Eleemosyna extinguit peccatum, sicut aqua extinguit ignem." See also Cicero, *De senectute* XIX: "ut cum aquae multitudine flammae vis opprimitur."

9. *life flies by*: "A quick passing dream" (1.14).

11–12. *single word / of her*: Some early commentators found this word in the next sonnet—*t' amo* (I love you)—but he may simply refer to her name. For some of the many sayings of Laura, see poems 23.83, 87, 123, 240, 250, 262, 279, 302, 330, 331.53–54, 341, 342, 359.5 ff.

14. *she took fame from all the others*: Laura stole it away to heaven.

362 Sonnet

This poem was originally numbered 358. Now awakened from long sleep, his thoughts automatically fly to heaven to seek her.

2. *I almost think I'm one*: This tone of hopeful reasonableness contrasts with that in poems 340–344 and 346–348.

3. *treasure with them there*: God and Laura.

5. *a sweet chill my heart will tremble*: Cf. 52.8.

7. *and honor you*: Cf. poem 5.

8. *you've changed your ways*: The word *variati* (changed) recalls the "lovely variation" of 351.13.

hair: Varying from dark to light through the seasons.

9. *She takes me to her Lord*: Although his thoughts are winged, they still draw back from full kinship with "her Lord."

12–14. *He answers . . .*: Zingarelli argues that it is Laura who speaks here. In either case, this response mirrors the mind of the poet, hopeful of his rise to Heaven now that he has suddenly changed his ways.

12. *destiny is firmly fixed*: Preordained, as was Laura's in 359.30.

13. *twenty years or thirty*: The wry, equivocating way in which this tercet ends ("et non fia però molto") suggests that Petrarch is speaking tongue in cheek.

363 SONNET

This poem was originally numbered 359. He still complains of a bitterness in the sweetness of his new-found freedom.

1. *dazzled me*: Held him in thrall.

2. *in the dark*: Without his "sun."

4. *turned oaks and elms*: Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X, 78–90, where Orpheus turns from love of women to the teaching of youths, and the trees gather around.

6. *boldness and fear*: No object to war against.

8. *to overflow with sorrow*: No one to pity.

9. *of him who stabs and soothes*: Love. *Molce* (soothes) appears only once in the *Canzoniere*.

10. *long tortures*: Of his love life—a laboring, a ceaseless gnawing.

11. *in freedom bittersweet*: A state of involuntary truce.

12. *Lord whom I adore*: Cf. 362.9: "her Lord."

13. *holds all Heaven*: *Folce* (holds) also appears just once. It derives from Latin *fulcire*, "to sustain," which may find a cognate in Middle English *folc* (folk).

14. *sick of it all*: Overflowing with it.

364 SONNET

This poem was originally numbered 360. It commemorates twenty-one years plus ten of suffering in "error" for love; he was destined barely to escape with his life. According to Wilkins (1951, p. 287), 1358 was probably the year Petrarch released the first incomplete collection of the *Canzoniere*, although this sonnet was not added until later, between 1367 and 1372.

2. *full of hope in sorrow*: Seeded with hope in a harvest of sorrow. Cf. 363.8.

5. *blame my life*: Take it to task.

6. *long error*: Cf. 361.8.

7. *the seed of virtue*: Similar to that bit of gold in the retort of 360.5.

my life's last part: The age of understanding and wonder.

8. *High God*: Higher, perhaps, than the deity of poems 362 and 363.

12. *Lord, you who have enclosed me*: Walled him in, like Job.

14. *I know my fault and do not justify it*: He is finished with his arguments. This and the next sonnet make up a final prayer that he be pardoned for failure *(fallo)* to reach the sublime.

365 SONNET

This poem was originally numbered 361. In verse reflecting some of his infirmities, he prays to an invisible King of Heaven in repentance for his errors and impieties.

1. *I go my way lamenting*: He begins this sonnet loosely, like a bird trying to take flight. Dante used similar language in the closing cantos of the *Paradiso*, for example, XXXII, 145–51.

those past times: All his experience of life, recollected.

2. *I spent in loving something . . . mortal*: That he invested in a changing, ephemeral Laura.

3. *I had wings*: Of high intellect. Cf. 360.29 and 360.39–40.

5. *shameful, wicked*: Unworthy of his promise (but reflecting the real world).

6. *invisible, immortal*: Words that sum up his accumulated knowledge of God.

7. *soul . . . has strayed*: Has traveled the low road because of his weakness. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, 22–27.

8. *all her emptiness*: *Defetto*, incompleteness in the theological sense.

11. *let my departure count*: May the honesty of his confession make a difference.

13. *deign that your hand be present*: That He takes him quickly and with mercy.

14. *only hope I have*: A thought that descends to the weak and prosaic, according to Muratori (cited by Carducci). Cf. 302.12: "Ah, why did she stop speaking and drop my hand?" Cf. also Dante, *Paradiso* XXXII, 145–46.

366 CANZONE

In this final canzone, a hymn of 137 lines to the Virgin Mary, the language of love is finally reabsorbed into the language of Scripture, a small part of which is cited here in the notes. Of all the praises raised here to the Virgin, only a few have not been applied to Laura at one time or another. Probably transcribed into Vat. Lat. 3195 in 1370–71 (Wilkins 1951, p. 175), the canzone appeared as the concluding poem in other manuscripts also, such as Malatesta and Quiriniano of 1373. It was not always believed that Petrarch intended to conclude his work with it, however. Castelvetro wrote: "If what is said is true, that it was found in a small box after Petrarch's death without ever having been shown to anyone, it is presumptuous on the part of the person who discovered it not only to classify it among the other rhymes that he brought to light but also to save it for the end, where the most excellent work is saved as conclusion." Castelvetro questioned the poem on theological grounds, saying it would not withstand the criticism of "pure Christianity," and on poetic grounds because of the repetition of the *-etta* rhymes in the third and seventh stanzas. Critical judgments since the eighteenth century overlook Petrarch's anomalies and consider this canzone his most beautiful work. Macaulay thought it to be the world's most beautiful hymn.

Numbers figure prominently in the form of the poem. Ten stanzas divide into two parts of six and seven lines, each stanza with its numerically significant pattern or gestalt. The name "Virgin" is repeated in lines one and nine, and an internal rhyme divides the last line of each stanza into five and six beats. The seven-line congedo offers the poet's last breath (*spirto*) to God.

1. *Virgin, so lovely*: He invokes the Virgin Mary with an echo of the Song of Songs 1:7, "O pulcherrima inter mulieres," and Rev. 12:1, "Signum magnum adparuit in coelo: mulier amicta sole et in capite eius corona stellarum duodecim."

2. *so pleased the highest Sun*: God the Father. Cf. Antiphon: "Beata Dei Genetrix."

3. *hide his light*: Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, 7: "Within your womb rekindled was the love"; and John 8:12, "Ego sum lux mundi."

4. *speak of you in verse*: Cf. Dante, *Inferno* II, 72: "love moved me, as it moves me now to speak." Cf. also Rev. 13:11–15, for the second beast that spoke for the first, moved by the dragon.

5. *cannot begin without your help*: As intercessor.

6. *His who loving placed himself in you*: The Holy Spirit. Cf. Isa. 11:1, "Egredietur virga de radice Iesse, et flos de radice eius ascendent, et requiescet super eum spiritus dominus"; and St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, 45, 6: "Deus pater operatus est creaturum per suum verbum quod est filius et per suum amorem, qui est spiritus sanctus." Cf. also Dante, *Paradiso* X, 1ff., and XXXIII, 7.

7. *I call upon the one*: Mary.

11. *bend now*: "Lower yourself" to speak to one so miserable. Cf. Ps. 87:3, "Inclina aurem tuam ad precem meam."

12. *help me in my war*: His continuing struggle with himself.

13. *I am dust*: A mortal man. Cf. Eccles. 10:9, "quid superbit terra et cinis?"

you are queen of Heaven: Cf. Antiphon, "Regina coeli."

14. *Virgin so wise*: The highest praise, after her beauty, is for her wisdom and prudence. Laura, too, was valued for her wise speech (and her lovely silences), both in life and as she appeared to him in dream.

the lovely number: Cf. Matt. 25:1–13, the parable of the foolish and prudent virgins at the wedding, a passage that speaks of prophecies and warnings; cf. also Antiphon I, *ad laudes* of the Roman breviary: "Haec est virgo sapiens et una de numero prudentum."

16. *with the brightest light*: Cf. St. Bernard, in *assumpt.* B. V. II, 9: "Processit ergo gloriosa Virgo, cuius lampas ardentissima ipsis quoque angelis miracolo fuit. . . ."

17. *O sturdy shield*: The defense of her wisdom and intercession. Cf. 2 Kings 22:3, "scutum meum et cornu salutis meae . . . quia circumdederunt me contritiones mortis."

19. *triumphant*: Able to transcend affliction through her power.

20. *blind ardor*: Cupidity (yearning) for worldly things (Vellutello). Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 2: "coeco carpitur igne."

21. *foolish mortals*: In contrast with "prudent virgins."

22. *those lovely eyes*: That he seeks now instead of Laura's, whose eyes had aroused his "blind ardor."

25. *turn to my perilous state*: Cf. Antiphon, *Salve Regina*: "illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte."

26. *who come imprudent*: Considering his past errors.

27. *pure and perfect*: Cf. Deut. 12:15. These attributes, and all that follow, reflect both ways, forward and backward. Chiari compares his style here to the Provençal poets Peire Cardenal and Peire de Corbiac.

28. *mother and daughter both*: Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, 1: "Oh Virgin Mother, daughter of your son," and XXXIII, 6; cf. also Roman breviary *domin.* II *oct.*: "Beata est, virgo Maria, quae dominum portasti creatorem mundi, Genuisti qui te fecit et in aeternum permanes virgo."

29. *brighten this life*: With the shield of her wisdom. The image corresponds to "pure."

adorn the other: Corresponding to "perfect."

30. *through you your son . . . Father*: The three indivisible.

31. *lofty window*: Mary, the means through which God's light came down in the body of Christ.

32. *final days*: According to the prophets and Church doctrine, the time of most need. Dante called it "plenitudo temporum," a fulfillment of promise. Cf. Virgil, *Eclogues* IV: "Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas," in regard to Orpheus' prediction: "Sexta in aetate cessabit harmonia mundi."

36. *who change the tears of Eve*: Brought the world hope of healing original sin. Zingarelli cites St. Augustine, *Sermones*: "Heva enim luxit, Maria exsultavit . . . , et Hevea planctum Mariae cantus exclusit."

37. *make me, for you can*: An imperative, followed by the force of a declarative. These modes of speech recur as an assertion of Mary's power. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII, 34–35.

worthy of this grace: Of changing his tears to happiness.

38. *blessèd without end*: Shield and comforter for all generations. Cf. Luke 1:48, "ecce enim ex hoc beatum me dicent omnes generationes."

40–41. *Virgin so holy, full of every grace . . .*: Cf. Luke 1:28, "Ave Maria, gratia plena," and 1:48, "respexit humilitatem ancillae suae."

43. *Fount of pity*: Cf. St. Ambrose: "Fons pietatis ex te ortus, Sol justitiae, thronus gratiae"; and St. Anselm: "Illa pie potens et potenter pia, de qua ortus est fons misericordiae."

44. *Sun of justice*: Cf. Mal. 4:2, "Orietur vobis timentibus nomen meum sol iustitiae."

brightens the world: The perilous age in which he lives.

47. *mother, daughter, and bride*: Cf. Song of Songs 4:8–9.

49. *freed us from our bonds*: Cf. Ps. 123:7.

50. *a free and happy place*: In an ideal sense, as in the Golden Age.

51–52. *upon whose holy wounds / I pray*: As the free and happy world prays, unmindful of its errors.

52. *true Beatrix*: Paradigm of blessedness.

53. *Virgin without an equal*: Cf. Antiphon: "Sola sine exempio placuisti domino nostro Jesu Christo." The attributes of Mary and Laura find more common ground in

this fifth stanza than anywhere else in the canzone. Five is the number of worldliness and blindness as well as of carnal love.

55. *surpass or even reach*: Cf. 342.5: "But she, who had no equal or a second."

56. *your holy thoughts*: Cf. 211.9–10: "Virtue, honor, beauty, gracious bearing, / sweet words have caught me in her lovely branches."

57. *living temple*: Cf. 325:16–30; and 1 Cor. 3:17, "templum Dei, quod estis vos."

58. *rich virginity*: Cf. 337.9–10: "And more, I built my nest of chosen thoughts / within that fertile tree."

59. *what joy is like*: *Ioconda* has been used once before, in 94.8, where the first and the second miracles of love are explained.

60. *through your prayers, O Mary*: This is the only time he addresses Mary by name, here in line 60, the number named "support" (*sostegno*) in the Hebrew alphabet.

61. *Virgin so sweet*: Cf. the *Salve Regina*: "O clemens, o pia, o dulcis virgo Maria."

62. *grace will abound*: Cf. Rom. 5:20, "ubi abundavit delictum, superabundit gratis."

63. *knee of my mind bent*: Cf. 128.103–104. A similar image appears in a poem by Guittone and in the Prayer of Manasseh: "flecto genu cordis mei precans a te bonitatem." Cf. also Luke 1:51, "dispersit superbos mente cordis sui."

64. *I beg you be my guide*: Recalling Laura's role since the beginning.

66. *bright and stable star*: Here in line 66 in the sixth stanza of poem 366 he locates the still point—by which one plots one's course through the seas of life—with the word *stabile*. Cf. Rev. 12–13, in which Mary prevails against the Antichrist numbered 666; cf. also 3 Kings 2:45, "stabilis coram Domino usque in sempiternum."

68. *faithful helmsman*: Who navigates under her star.

69. *consider now*: Another prayer in the imperative mode.

how frightening is the storm: That is building over his times, his world.

70. *without a tiller*: Intended also in the political sense of being without a leader, continuing the theme of the last days. Cf. Rev. 13:2–3, 132:11, 206:40, 235:14, and 277:7.

73. *though it, no doubt, be sinful*: Proven in all he has written.

75. *let your foe have the last laugh*: The Devil, who listens. Cf. Ps. 11:12 and 24:2. In Dante's *Inferno* (XXXIII, 129–35), the Devil is said to operate out of bodies of living men whose souls have already fallen into Hell. Zingarelli notes that this "contrasto tra la Vergine e il demonio" was a commonplace of the time.

78. *virginal cloister*: An expression used in many holy texts.

79. *Virgin, how many tears*: The seventh and eighth stanzas change the emphasis of the first six, moving from praise in the first part to personal history, maintaining prayer in the second part.

89. *more swift than arrows*: Cf. Wis. of Sol. 5:9–12, "transierunt omnia illa . . . aut tamquam sagitta emissa in locum destinatum."

91. *Death awaiting me*: Cf. Job 17:1, "et solum mihi superest sepulcrum."

92. *that one is dust*: Laura. The eighth stanza returns to the subject of Mary's eternal stability and power.

94. *knew not one*: The mortal Laura had always stood apart, like the number "1," and he had observed her from afar. These words are consistent with an unrequited love but also with the just person's detachment from wretchedness and sin.

96. *would still have happened*: Was fated to happen, and he was helpless to change it.

had she wished otherwise: Had she given in to his desire.

98. *Lady of Heaven*: Ruler of herself and all others.

you our Goddess: A divine role mistakenly given to Laura. Cf. 294.4, 311.8, and 337.8.

99. *be fitting*: Permissible in the eyes of God.

100. *Virgin of superb senses*: *Alti sensi* literally "all-seeing," "all-knowing." Here, in line 100, the humanity and understanding of Mary—mother, daughter, bride—are raised above all other models.

101–102. *could not be done / by others*: Such as Laura, or other mortals in whom he once placed his faith.

102. *your great power*: To detach herself from evil and nurture good.

104. *bring honor to you*: In support of this dubious concept, that her interceding for him might add a star to her crown, One commentator cited a secret of the Roman missal: "et in honorem b. Mariae semper Virginis, et b. Johannis Baptistae et ss. Apostolorum Petri et Pauli, et istorum et omnium sanctorum; ut illis proficiat ad honorem, nobis autem ad salutem." Cf. 289.14.

105. *Virgin, in whom*: Stanza 9 takes him into the sight of the goddess and back to his original error, his "insane vow," an act of pride for which he will ask forgiveness in the next stanza.

I place all of my hope: Cf. line 3: "that inside you He chose to hide his light"; and Eccles. 24:25, "in me omnis spes vitae et virtutis."

107. *at the last pass*: From life to death and God's final judgment. Cf. 333.12.

109. *His own high likeness*: Cf. Gen. 1:26, "creavit hominem ad imaginem suam"; and Wis. of Sol. 2:13.

110. *one so low*: He of inferior senses who now implores her.

111. *Medusa and my sin*: That of gazing with desire at the goddess Laura. Medusa's image is in keeping with this stanza's extreme comparisons. In one mythic age she was supremely beautiful, in another supremely ugly.

turned me to stone: Cf. 179.9.

114. *tears fill up my weary heart*: Let not his tears be useless; let them be preserved.

115. *be devout*: Redeeming.

116. *mud of earth*: The flesh of Adam, the dross. Cf. the Easter hymn, "Imaginem vultus tui Tradens Adamo nobilem Limo iugasti spiritum."

117. *first and insane vow*: His idealistic vow to praise Laura, in a tumultuous mix with his need to tell the whole truth about her. Cf. poems 5 and 6.

118. *Virgin so kind*: Benignly sensitive and forgiving (*umana*). The tenth stanza begins with a prayer and concludes with a vow.

enemy of pride: Because no person who seeks her help is more deserving than another; each stands equal before her.

119. *love of our same origin*: As a creature of God.

121. *a bit of mortal, fleeting dust*: Laura.

122. *marvelous faith*: Wholly invested in that one bit of dust whose origin was God.

123. *a noble thing*: *Gentile*, in its extreme simplicity, humanizes Mary while casting Laura's nobility in a new light.

125. *I rise up at your hands*: If Mary accepts his plea and helps him.

126. *in your name*: Dedicating all that he will write in repentance to the Virgin.

130. *changed desires*: Put the good and the bad into perspective.

131. *The day draws near*: Cf. Ezek. 7:12, "Venit tempus, appropinquavit dies"; and Heb. 10:25, "tanto magis, quanto videritis appropinquantem diem."

134. *death and conscience now stab*: Cf. poem 363: "out of the hands of him (Love) who stabs and soothes."

136. *man and the truth of God*: God (*Dio*) rhymes internally with *mio* in line 137; the word *verace* is repeated in lines 135 and 136, establishing a link between man, God, and spirit in the final harmonic scheme.

137. *accept my final breath in peace*: This act reverses the act of God breathing life into Adam and brings an end to the poet's war against himself and his fate. Compare this with the closing words of St. Augustine's *Confessiones*: "Domine Deus, pacem da nobis."

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